THE CENTRAL AMERICANS

ARTHUR RUHL

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THE CENTRAL AMERICANS

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THE CENTRAL AMERICANS

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THE VOLCANO OF IRAZU, NEAR SAN JOSÉ DE COSTA RICA, DURING AN ERUPTION.

THE CENTRAL AMERICANS

ADVENTURES AND IMPRESSIONS BETWEEN MEXICO AND PANAMA

BY
ARTHUR RUHL

ILLUSTRATED

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK · LONDON
1928

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Printed in the United States of America

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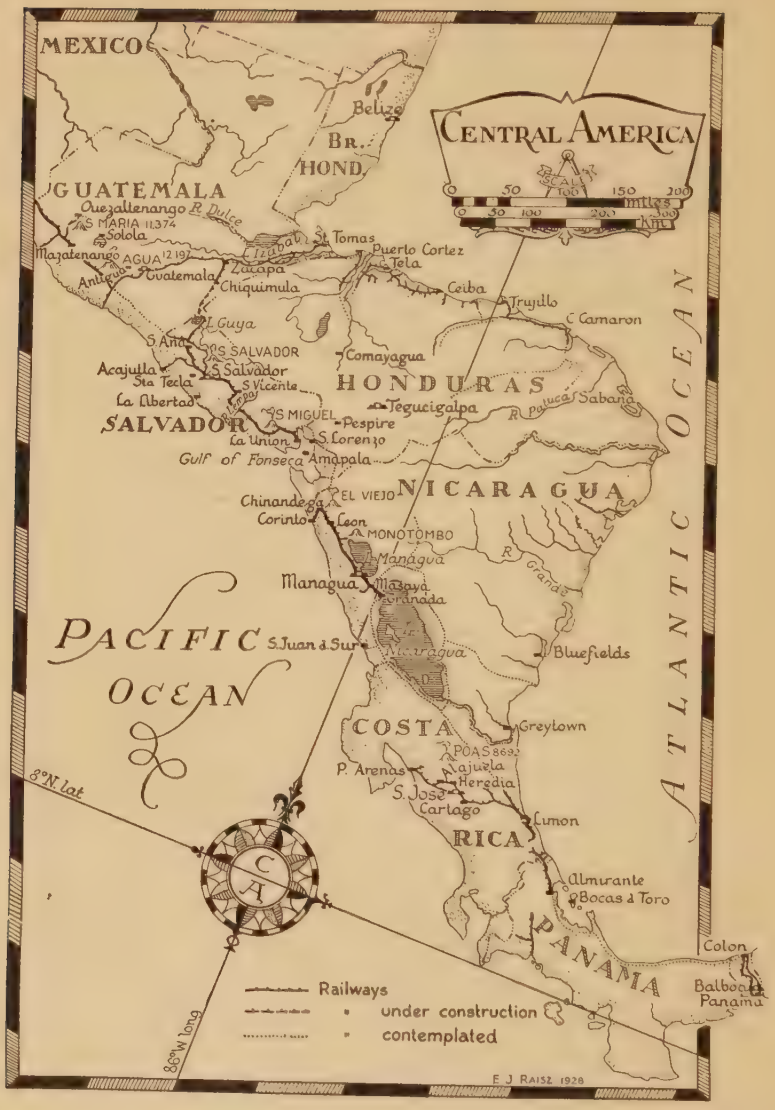
SEA-CHANGE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SCALE
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MEXICO
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Sta Tecla
S Salvador
S Vicente
HONDURAS
La Libertad
Tegucigalpa
Sabana
S MIGUEL
Pespire
SALVADOR
La Union
S Lorenzo
Gulf of Fonseca
Amapala
EL VIEJO
NICARAGUA
Chinandega
Corinto
Leon
MONOTOMBO
Managua
Managua
Masaya
Granada
PACIFIC
OCEAN
S Juan d Sur
Nicaragua
Bluefields
COSTA
Greytown
POAS 8692
P. Arenas
Alajuela
Heredia
S. Jose
Cartago
Limon
RICA
Almirante
Bocas d Toro
PANAMA
Colon
Balboa
Panama
ATLANTIC OCEAN
8°N. lat
83°W long
Railways
under construction
contemplated
E J RAISZ 1928

CHAPTER I

SEA-CHANGE

I

Just as the big white fruiter backed out of her slip and the last good-bys—*Adios! Adios! Mamá*—were being shouted across that strip of dirty tide-water which means heart-break to some and adventure and escape to others and to all a certain finality, the deck-steward—how beaming and how kind!—lugged up from below and hung by the promenade-deck rail, a bunch of perfectly ripened bananas.

It was at once a gesture and a reality, for a bunch of bananas was to hang there throughout the voyage, and any one might stroll by and pick as many as he wished as if he were a happy savage on a tropical isle. The Battery was still only a cable's length away; behind it, like a theatre back-drop, towered that hard and serrated sky-line, with all its implications, but here on the ship we were already in the Caribbean, and could almost see the flying fish skittering above the blue water and hear the stiff rustle of palms.

Down below, the Brooklyn produce-merchant and his wife and only child, booked "for the cruise," were already at luncheon.

"Ma! What's this?"

"Chester, eat your dinner! That's *bull*-yun!"

"Ma! What is it?"

"I told you—it's *bull*-yun!"

"Ma! . . ."

Where else, except during that first meal on ship-

board, do one's fellow humans so engagingly dramatize themselves and take on their characters in a few swift words? A week later, and they may have escaped into that complex and foggy jungle in which all of us wander and hide. Here, for a moment—surely one of the delightful of life's minor moments—they emerge, clean-cut, and speak only "lines." That obese and jolly gentleman at the captain's right—obviously to become, presently, the life of the ship, and, as a friend of the company and veteran visitor to its ports of call, interpreter of all phenomena below the Gulf—already is painting in one of his inimitable stencils:

"Yes, there were 75 generals in that army, 69 colonels, 40 majors, 25 captains, and 16 privates! *Har! Har! Har! . . .*"

Off Florida, a morning or two later, we drew in close to the coast, and steamed slowly, like some sort of sight-seeing motor-bus, along that string of blazing beaches and exotic hotels—"so's we can see our real estate!" as the stout gentleman said.

The low keys dropped below the horizon, all about was blue water and yellow seaweed, and the sun went down in a Gulf of fire.

It is hereabouts that something usually happens—one of those profound and subtle sea-changes that are left out of most histories and don't get into the political editorials. All along you have been a Northerner headed south, and suddenly you find yourself *there*, and looking back. The "we" of yesterday has suddenly become "they." The damp, caressing airs have begun to soften one's very skin and finger-nails, as if one had just come from a hot bath; but something or other has gone deeper than that.

Values are changing. Doubts of the certainties of yesterday creep in, along with a curious pull, almost a sort of homesickness, for something that is here, in this other world. Dawn and sunset, the velvet dark in between, with the warm sea-water breaking into phosphorescence along the bows, seem waiting for something, smiling a little indulgently, as for a wayward child turning back to its home.

How strange and unreal, at this distance, seem all those measures of virtue in terms of numbers—speed, height, population, profits! How quaint those machines in which people rush from one prison-house to another! How many of their splendid achievements have any reality, as the beauty of this day is real, and how many are merely pathetic bridges flung out to escape their discontent? Is "this," then, the real thing, and "that" all wrong? . . .

But before you have had time to solve this ancient riddle—if there is a solution—a line of coast comes up, then a fort and long rows of what look, in the distance and the pale morning light, like deserted marble palaces with all their windows out, and presently the ship is tumbling out automobiles and all sorts of other Northern stuff onto the wharf at Havana.

II

Where are all the little hooded victorias which used to be so typical of Spanish-American plazas and streets?

Gone. Sunk, so far as Havana is concerned, without a trace.

The automobile, that convenient and pestiferous invention which has destroyed distance and repose in

equal quantities wherever it has spread, has made a thorough job of it. A stroll from the steamer through the narrow streets of the "old town"—which are only wide enough for a good running jump—under grilled windows, past doorways opening into cool patios, has all the quaint charm now of a tramp through a boiler factory. Cars of every known American make pack the space between shop-fronts. Each narrow street is of necessity a one-way path, and the police handle traffic well, but in the cramped space it is impossible to know what's coming at each corner, and the resultant hullabaloo and dodging will sadden the memory and jangle the nerves of any one born before 1900.

The carriage parade in the cool of the afternoon—*mamá* and the *niñas* solemnly erect and dusted with rice powder into human marshmallows—used to be one of the regulation Spanish-American sights. There, in all cities big enough to have an avenue reserved for such amenities, you saw all the *gente decente*. It was winsome and charming, or gaudy and *mondaine*, depending on the capital, whether one was in Caracas or the Calle Florida, in Buenos Ayres.

They must have had something of the sort in Havana, though I never knew the old city, but they could scarcely have it now. The Malecón, with the seas washing up against the sea-wall, the trade-wind blowing, and the sun going down in a blaze in the blue Gulf, is a noble setting, but the stray traveller, standing where the Paseo de Marti comes down to the water, and a constant stream of motors goes scuttling past, might, so far as seeing the Havanese is concerned, about as well be sitting on a fence on a bright Sunday somewhere along the Boston Post Road.

The surfaces of American life, our material culture, flow over and into the old surfaces like syrup over a pile of restaurant buckwheats. Here are the red front and the identical interior standardized by the ingenious Woolworth—*casa de 10 centavos*. The New York Sunday papers, rushed down by rail, appear under the arcades only a few days late. There are no more "señoritas"—still speaking in the same surface sense; shops, offices, trolley-cars are full of young women in short skirts, sleeveless dresses, modern hats, who are earning their livings and are expecting soon to vote.

If almost nothing of intellectual America contrives to cross the narrow Florida strait—though, to be sure, here in one of the bookshop windows the Cubans are being told that gentlemen prefer blondes—*los caballeros las prefieran rubias*—our sports and fashions do, and the more startling of our crimes.

Columns of polysyllabic Spanish are given to the details of a Gray-Snyder murder trial, the one principal described as the *mujer gato* (cat woman), the other as the *vampiro macho* (male vampire). Some of it is translated directly from the special stories New York "feature-writers" have done for their own papers, some seem to have come from the local paper's own correspondent. It is odd to come across some such phrase as "hot dogs"—in the description of the antics of the spectators at the trial—literally translated into *perros calientes!*

El Mundo, in which some of these stories appear, prints also "Mutt and Jeff" and "Bringing up Father," with similarly outlandish results when the jargon of each is literally transferred into the sonorous tongue of Cervantes. It is a member of the Associated Press

and comes out daily with a three-section paper of thirty-two pages.

Passing the office of *El Pais* round about five in the afternoon, you will probably be surprised to find a crowd of several hundred young Cubans, of all complexions from white to black, eagerly watching the "Playograph" present, play by play, just as it would be shown at home, the game between Philadelphia and the Giants (*Gigantes*), or between Cincinnati and the *Piratas*.

I say "surprised," but was told by no less an authority than Señor Pepé Conte, who is now sporting editor of *El Pais* and used to live and work in the States, that there is no cause for surprise, inasmuch as "Havana is one of the biggest baseball towns in the world."

The Cubans have not only sent a number of first-class players to American teams, but they have a league of their own in the winter, and the amount of money spent by the leading Havana papers on covering American baseball is similar to that required in our own country.

The word "fan" is modified into *fanático*, but most of the baseball slang is either translated literally or lifted bodily without translation. Cochrane could do no better than send a *fly indecente e indecoroso* to Combs, Meusel helps Gehrig to second with a *hit al right*, various unfortunates *muere* on bases, and the change in line-up for the Cincinnati Reds will bring Zitzmann to the *jardin central* ("central garden")!

. . . "Don't try to consume it all the first few days. Remember that Cuban distilleries and breweries work night and day." Thus *The Times of Cuba* in a series of "Dont's" for those intending to visit the island.

The warning was doubtless needed or it wouldn't have been given. Warm weather had come when we touched at Havana, the peak of the tourist season was past, and alcohol plus the languors of summer is doubtless less irresistible than the sudden sight of open-air bars on every corner plus the exciting consciousness the winter trippers have that they belong with that élite which, "isn't worrying about winter in the North." What I mean to say is that after strolling about town I could not see that the visible Americans were any worse than American tourists usually are.

Of course the absurd romance surrounding the whole subject of alcohol at home is somewhat dulled by the time the steamer arrives, thanks to the "medical supplies" permitted even to ships sailing under the American flag. Once in Havana, it is as hard to be romantic about rum as about chewing-gum in the New York subway. Appetites and capacities differ, to be sure; tired nature's sweet restorer makes each day a new one; and yet any one who could remain in Havana for three days and retain the fresh enthusiasm for spirituous drinks which the Eighteenth Amendment has created at home would have to be uncommonly resilient or uncommonly tough.

There seemed to be such, nevertheless. And among the horrible examples whose exploits were still resounding lugubriously through the permanent American colony was an American senator to whom the Cubans tried to be specially nice. They even held a special session of the Senate in his honor, and the distinguished statesman was so lost to the world that he didn't even send word that he couldn't come!

III

If Colon had never been cleaned up and the Canal never built—if old Colon were still the dump on the beach it used to be, a string of leprous shacks, in which you might get drunk or robbed or wake up to find that some beach-comber had died of yellow fever overnight in front of your door—it might be wilder than it is now, but scarcely more curious and of the theatre.

Nature intended this strip of tropical beach to be a strip of tropical beach, but man willed otherwise. Nearly everybody and everything on the "Atlantic side," as they say in the Zone (for, of course, Panama City faces the Pacific,) has, therefore, the air of having been brought here, of being the symbol or sample of something rooted somewhere else. And ordinary things acquire, because of what they suggest, quite extraordinary qualities, just as a tin can by the river's brim a tin can may be and nothing more, but may tear your heart out with its familiar label if stumbled onto in the middle of the Sahara.

You emerge from your ship and the suspended animation of a week or so on a tropical sea, tramp down the dock-shed past scuttling little electric trucks steered by Jamaica negroes bossed by Yankee foremen, and it is not boxes and bales, but whole civilizations and the tremendous adventure of commerce that you see as you pass California sardines for Talcuahuano, Chile; Waukegan barbed wire for Amapala, Honduras; Bordeaux wine for Bluefields; Italian olive oil for La Libertad; and something marked "Vorsicht," which is going to cross the continental divide via the Canal, go down the west coast to Antofagasta, be swung out into a lighter,

hauled through the surf and finally end up in a little one-story stone shop in the thin, cold air of the Bolivian highlands.

You cross the street to get into the shade, the sweat trickling down the backs of your hands, hear a vaguely familiar sound of rubber-soled feet, the slap of a ball and a referee's whistle, and, lo and behold, it is the Cristobal Y. M. C. A. basket-ball game, and all just as if it were in West 23d Street!

A negress shuffles by, face opaque and inscrutable, neck nodding in rhythm with her proud, bored, slightly camel-like walk; the palms overhead rustle stiffly in the tepid trades; and you are just slipping into a tropic revery when your eyes are slapped suddenly by the sharp metallic definiteness of a bronze sign reading "New York Life" or "Chase National Bank."

An invisible line separates American Cristobal from Panamanian Colon. On the one side of it the Eighteenth Amendment and other American idiosyncrasies, including coal-pockets that can fill a liner's bunkers almost as easily as a man fills a bushel basket, on the other one is east of Suez and welcome to raise any and every sort of thirst.

Hindus and Chinamen and all their silks and Oriental gimcracks; barkeeps and dance-hall girls; Jamaica negroes—"British objects"—with their flat singsong; Caribbean mongrels of every conceivable crossing of tropical beach-comber blood, carry on here what is left of the old Colon life against an exotic background of rectilinear streets, cash-registers, traffic policemen, and all the Occidental gimcracks which American industrialism and salesmanship combine to try to make people think they want.

Constantly crossed by the American life from either end, swept and disinfected out of its natural squalor, the old bazaar and bagnio quarter seems quite to belong to the theatre. Its flimsy rookeries are stage "sets"; its people, the more real they are, seem the more "authentic" types from plays like "Rain" or "White Cargoes"; and as you drift under the high wooden arcades, mechanical pianos clattering, phonographs squeaking, smells and accents evoking a dozen different civilizations and settings at once, you constantly have the feeling that the only thing Colon needs is "lines" and a plot.

A tropical smell of garlic, fried fish, pineapple, and wood smoke is suddenly cut across by an odor that belongs a couple of thousand miles away—the cool, beery breath of the old-time American saloon. And here, indeed, it is: style, early Coney Island; vast bar, heavy mahogany woodwork, mirrors, a giant barkeep (out of "The Deluge"), with just the right air of cynical wisdom; good nature in so far as the latter is commercially profitable; the ability, if need be, to break anybody's head with a bung-starter.

Obviously such a phenomenon, obsolescent even in its native habitat, doesn't belong on a steaming Caribbean beach. It's a part, like everything else here, of some sort of play. You no sooner sit down (with an Englishman whom you last saw in Finland whose ship happens to be tied up in the next slip, and whom you quite naturally—this being Panama—bumped into as soon as you struck the street) and give the order, when bang—there's a shot!

Naturally. There would be. Or maybe it wasn't a shot—only the backfire from an army truck. Anyhow, everybody piles into the streets. Here the setting is

even more cunningly worked out. Against a background of ramshackle wooden arcades, gobs in spotless white, skin-tight around the hips, Panamanian policemen, girls with mango-colored flesh looking out from upper windows, distant dance-music and warm street-lamps, a bareheaded *mestizo*, livid with fury, is shrieking "*Plata! Plata!*" which means money, and asserting that a white man, whose make-up suggests a Kentucky colonel or a mild sort of Simon Legree, has stolen his $150. Saying so, he lunges forward as if, had he but a knife, he would carve the other's heart out, while the white man, with a superb gesture, also lunges forward and hisses the expletive "You —— —— ——!" so much in vogue nowadays in our robuster popular plays.

Will the white man kill the other man? Will the other man get his money? At any rate it's delightful—the suspense excellent, the setting perfect, and it seems that surely now the action must begin. However—and that's the trouble with Colon—nothing does begin. The lines aren't ready, policemen and friends push in, the *mestizo* fades away, Simon Legree returns to the bar to tell his troubles and have a drink, and the whole situation comes to nothing.

You drift down the street—a flock of gabbling American tourists; a huge negro woman squatting over a charcoal brazier; smells of greasy *cazuelas*, of rum, sweat, suddenly cut into by the cool sizzle and slightly cloying vanilla-and-chocolate breath of an American soda-water fountain and drug-store. Across the street, behind swinging half-doors, American sailors dancing with cedar and lemon-colored girls in pink skirts to a marimba orchestra.

How gently, not to say shyly, that giant with the

blond pompadour—born in Dakota, probably, from a German mother by a Swedish father—pushes round his partner, under whose dusky skin, gray with powder, sizzle all the crisscrossing strains from the Caribs and Conquistadores down. Poor, lonesome gob! . . .

But for the matter of that, poor girl! Nothing ahead, rather too much behind, almost white in spite of it, and clutching now for an instant, in the arms of this red-faced Yankee, the exultation of those who *sauter la barrière.*

However that may be—honk! honk! . . . And a motor-car slides coolly by, in the rear seat two smart young naval officers in white. Ah! Our old friend, Pinkerton, out of "Madam Butterfly," and for an instant a bar or two of Puccini's music seems to rise above the pianos and phonographs.

This sort of thing goes on indefinitely, not to say to the point of dizziness, in this extraordinary town. There's almost nothing you don't see a sample of, in that half-mile stroll from the ship down to the Washington Hotel. Slatternly magdalens stand on the sidewalk in front of the little booths decorated with picture post-cards, rotogravure photographs, and Japanese fans, in which they ply their ancient trade. And a few blocks farther, at the shore end of the road, you come on the low stone Anglican façade—as much of a stage-set as any of the rest, with the palms and the warmly swashing surf behind it—of Christ Church by the Sea.

You wait for the stage bells to toll and for the young curate to come out the ivied door, but the bells are silent and the curate doesn't come. With the steamer sailing in the morning, it seems out of the question to try to arrange the plots and supply the lines that all

that scenery back there in the town is waiting for, at any rate to-night, and there's nothing to do but take a swim in the Washington's tank, if it's still open, or go back to the ship.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

CHAPTER II

THE LAY OF THE LAND

This is not the place for the story of the Canal, and I intend to steer away from it and across to Costa Rica with all due speed. Reluctantly as the free-born American suppresses his impulse to advise the State Department, I hope to steer as sternly away from that. And certainly nothing is further from my desire than to add anything to the propaganda and "sales talk" with which the contemporary world is burdened. But as the *Calamares* leaves her slip at Cristobal I shall risk breaking all these good intentions to the extent of passing along the notion, which must have come to many Americans visiting the Canal Zone, that our diplomatic representative at Panama occupies a strategic position the possibilities of which are not always fully realized.

Whatever the criticisms of our policies and behavior in Latin America, the Canal itself and the Canal Zone make up a show which moves foreigners and natives alike. Here you have the peculiar genius of these United States, or at any rate what most Latin Americans regard as our characteristic genius—energy, time-saving, sanitation, the magic of machinery, etc.—represented at its best.

Whether it be the complete lack of flies in some Colon barroom, or the trick of filling a ship's coal-bunkers almost as easily as a grocer fills a brown-paper bag with sugar, or the soft, purring magic with which—simply by pressing a few buttons—locks are filled and

emptied, safety gates swung into place, and ocean-going steamships lifted lightly over the continental divide, here you have a museum piece, so to say, of the sort of achievement for which, were we to be buried to-morrow as deep as the Ptolemies, we might possibly be remembered.

Everybody who crosses the Isthmus sees something of this, even though he never budges from his deck-chair, but, with a little more trouble on our part, he, and in particular the somewhat standoffish and instinctively critical Latin American passer-by, might easily and pleasantly see more.

A Chilean minister of foreign affairs, a Colombian poet, a Salvadorean coffee-planter, a Nicaraguan sugar-man,—let us say,—is passing through the Canal on one of his usual trips to Paris. Suppose the news of his coming were to be thoughtfully passed along, and some unusually "simpatico" young legation secretary were to board his ship and greet him on his arrival at Cristobal or Panama.

"*Muy buenos dias, Don Fulano!* We heard that you were coming, and, while your time is short and doubtless already largely taken up by your personal friends here, if there is anything we might do to make your brief visit more pleasant or profitable, we are yours to command. 'It is your house,' as you say. How about a little drive out to see one of the locks? Or possibly, while you are inspecting the Canal, Doña Fulano and your charming daughters might like to glance at the ruins of the old city? The Zone is a narrow strip, to be sure, and our problem of conquering the tropics small as compared with the task you have in your own country, but, as far as it goes, it is not without interest, and the

lessons learned here on a small scale are applicable elsewhere."

Something in this vein. For which, naturally, the State Department would pick a young man who spoke Spanish perfectly, and supply the modest but essential contingent fund for motor-hire, luncheons, etc. Steamship agents, branch banks, trading companies in foreign ports, offer this sort of courtesy daily to entirely unimportant tourists who happen along with letters of introduction, and think nothing of it. Diplomatic representatives do the same thing for all sorts of casuals who are able to wheedle a line of recommendation from their local congressman. Why, at such a peculiarly strategic point as the Isthmus, might not our officials be in a position to offer similar courtesies to really important strangers, who have no congressional acquaintances, no letters to anybody, and are ferried through the Canal, unnoticed strangers in a strange land?

Here we are, at any rate, outward bound from Cristobal, with Puerto Limon only a night's steaming away —an appropriate moment, with five republics and much up-and-down travel ahead, to cast an eye along this little understood isthmus and get the general lay of the land.

It should be remembered, in the first place, that it *is* only an isthmus, a section of the continental backbone pushing up out of the sea and little more. It is a tent on a tropical beach; a roof, with eaves in the warm blue waters of the Pacific and the Caribbean, and a gable of volcanoes.

There are several peaks from which you can see—or could, if clouds and mists weren't nearly always in the way (mountain-climbers will know what I mean)—

down to both oceans. In a few hours by train or motor, a few days on muleback, you climb from the languid coast, with its fevers and chills, to the temperate highlands and even to climates like those of late autumn in the North. None of the Central American capitals, except Managua, is as "tropical," in the sense in which that word is usually understood, as New York or Washington in midsummer. In Guatemala City, in June, people sleep under two blankets; in Quezaltenango, the second city of Guatemala, the traveller will probably want to put his overcoat on top of the blankets. And it is up here in the highlands that the coffee—Central America's most important crop—is grown, and here are most of the cities and people of consequence. Practically all of what might be called the "real" Costa Rica, for instance, lies in a fertile, mountain-rimmed table-land known as the Meseta Central.

The Central America dear to the magazine illustrator and the Sunday supplement; the familiar stencil, consisting of a strip of tropical beach, a few corrugated-iron shacks, buzzards, cocoanut-palms, and sprinkling of more or less depressed and depressing "natives," can still be found in the hot country,—it was one of the coast towns of Honduras that O. Henry had in mind in writing "Cabbages and Kings,"—but it is far from the whole picture or even the more significant facts.

Government in all these little republics—less so in Costa Rica than the others—is largely a family affair, or an affair of a few families which for generations have controlled the more or less submerged and inarticulate mass. The president is almost always able to have his finger on pretty much everything, clear out to the remotest village, and with luck to pass on his power, with

a suitable gesture of an election, to one of his friends. When, for one reason or another, he loses his grip, there is a show or the use of force known as "revolution."

Revolutions of this variety are more or less endemic, thanks to inheritance, lack of transportation, of political experience, and the absence of any habit of accepting votes as final when the defeated party is still able to muster the more force. Of late years they have become less fashionable—in Costa Rica almost obsolete—and, with the United States refusing to recognize governments brought into power in this way, harder to use with any practical effect.

But the long-distance observer will do well to bear in mind that in Central America, as elsewhere, every-day life goes on curiously undisturbed, whatever the antics of politicians, and that there is often little connection between that life, whatever it may be, and the things which constitute the odd commodity known as "news" and bring the name of a country into the cable dispatches.

The comfortable pat-pat-pat of brown hands making *tortillas* is a much more characteristic Central American sound than the whine of bullets. Fevers and snakes may be found in their natural places, and the half-breed *insurrecto*, machete in hand and a pint of aguardiente under his belt, may periodically be whipped up to fight, but in two fairly comprehensive visits to the five republics I have had no adventures with any of these things, and the traveller who really wants to see the country and to know the people will be much more likely to recall crystalline plateau mornings and moonlit mountain nights, the smell of grinding cane and boiling molasses, the vistas down half a hundred miles or so of

tumbled mountain country, past the dark green of coffee, and the light green of cane, and on down to the misty blue-sea floor. He will remember those starts at day-break—coffee by candle-light; mules saddled and brought round with the first streaks of dawn, and off on the trail in the velvety freshness of the tropical morning; volcanoes smoking lazily against the blue; the neighborliness of the open road and the gypsy-like cheer of some wayside inn, into which he and his mules come hurrying just ahead of the afternoon's rain.

The motor-car, radio, and newspaper syndicate, let alone cables and modern steamships, are shrinking the world faster than many stay-at-home people think. The first is beginning to break down one of the fundamental Central American difficulties—the lack, in this tangled, up-and-down country, of roads—and one is nowadays whirled up in a few hours to places—the once "buried" capital of Honduras, for instance—which could only be reached, a few years ago, by several days' journey on muleback from the coast. Parties of Yankee trippers drop in to the capitals weekly, from their Caribbean cruises or their trips from San Francisco to New York by way of the Canal, and one can leave the Guatemala banana country at luncheon-time on a Saturday and have his Tuesday's breakfast in New Orleans.

A Saturday-night dance at the San José de Costa Rica Golf Club is exactly like a Saturday-night dance at any well-regulated country club in the United States. At a Friday-afternoon dance at the beautiful country club of San Salvador, with people taking tea on the terrace, a marimba orchestra playing, and the volcano at the left curving down to the distant town, you might fancy yourself in Honolulu, or the Riviera, or Southern

California, or where you will—in any case, a world away from the Central America of O. Henry or our newspaper cartoons. These things are mere surfaces, perhaps —"veneer," as the editorial writers are so fond of saying; but so is the dismal string of corrugated-iron shacks on the tropical beach a surface, a stencil, and one is scarcely more significant than the other.

Central American editors may roar about the Northern Colossus—for they, too, have their stencils—but more and more upper-class Central American boys and girls are going to school and college in the States. No ineptitude of our State Department seems to have any visible effect on the constantly increasing volume of our trade with the isthmian republics, and, whatever the oratory, all sorts of things from automobiles and concrete-mixers to breakfast foods and syndicated Sunday photographs continue their peaceful penetration.

Is there any such thing as "progress"? Do people really get any "better"? Is the America of Sinclair Lewis "better" than the America of Howells, or of Emerson and Hawthorne? Are express-trains "better" than ox-carts, or store clothes "better" than homespun? Delightful subjects these for leisurely debates in steamship smoke-rooms or at Sunday-morning breakfasts in the country! The simple fact is that profound changes are taking place in these once pastoral and patriarchal republics, and—take it or leave it, like it or not—they are being drawn into the general stream of the modern world.

"NICE LITTLE COSTA RICA"

CHAPTER III

"NICE LITTLE COSTA RICA"

I

It was just after a gray dawn that the *Calamares* let fall her anchor in the roadstead, off a low green coast behind which rose the mountains of the continental divide. There were palms and a wharf and corrugated-iron roofs, then a deep belt of soft green,—the banana country,—and all the rest—the tile-roofed towns, mule trails, and cascades, volcanoes and coffee fincas—of the interior was flattened down into a card-board silhouette.

In January it would have been drenched in sun. Being the end of April now and the beginning of the wet season, it was drenched in rain—a lazy, warm, persistent rain that veiled the foot-hills, trailed over the banana-flats, and fell almost noiselessly on the sea.

A launch put out from somewhere under the palms, made a wide turn to our starboard gangway, and two pleasant-faced, rather severely dressed young men came aboard. They took off their hats to doctor and mate, and kept them in their hands as, half-bowing to the little herd of passengers, they made their way to the music-room—quiet, self-contained, slightly whimsical young men, aware of their responsibilities as officials without forgetting that these tourists were by way of being guests—striking just the right Costa Rican note.

People have a habit of speaking of "nice little Costa Rica," and, after two visits to the country at intervals

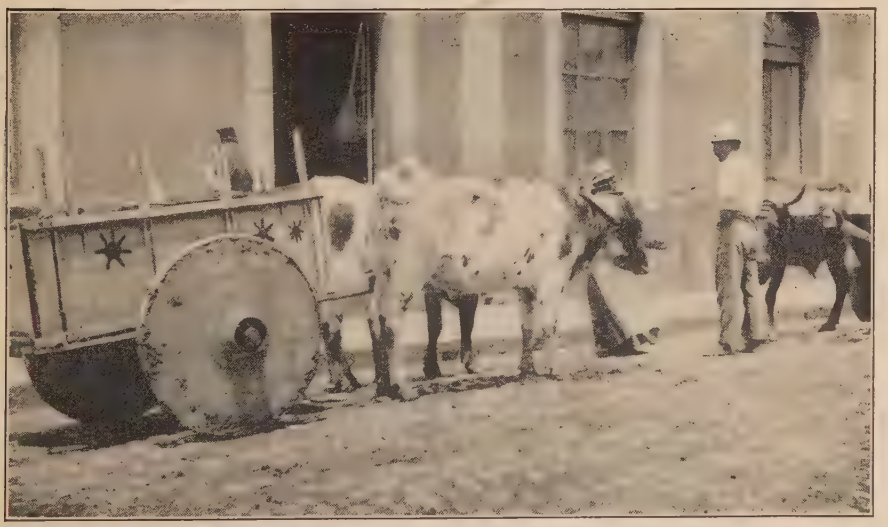
of slightly more than a dozen years, I see no reason for changing the habit. The Costa Ricans themselves have a bland way of setting themselves a bit aside from the rest of Central America. At a dance at the San José Golf Club, already referred to, a young lady, hearing that I was about to travel northward through the five republics, exclaimed: "How interesting! But what a pity that you didn't save Costa Rica until the last!"

Various facts of geography and of past and present history give a certain basis for this state of mind. Practically all the "real" Costa Rica, the country and people that most educated Costa Ricans think of as home, lies in the wide, fertile, mountain-rimmed table-land known as the "Meseta Central." The banana-lands of the East Coast, with their Jamaica negro laborers and American superintendents, make almost a separate English-speaking country. The Pacific slope is "native," but has none of the important towns.

On this central table-land has grown up a homogeneous little nation (there are only about half a million people in all of Costa Rica, which is about twice the size of Holland) of industrious, prosperous, and literate citizens, white or nearly so, with few large landowners and many peasant proprietors. There is nothing quite like it anywhere else in Central America.

It is often said that the original Spanish settlers of Costa Rica were "Gallegos," and a more sober and law-abiding type than most of those who drifted into the neighboring colonies. Instead of a land filled with sizable towns and thickly populated by docile and easily enslaved Indians—as was the case, for instance, in Guatemala—they found a comparatively uninhabited region where they had to shift for themselves. They are

IN THE PLEASANT HIGHLAND COUNTRY OF COSTA RICA'S "MESETA CENTRAL."



THE GAILY DECORATED, SOLID-WHEELED OX-CARTS CHARACTERISTIC OF COSTA RICA.

thus supposed to have developed some of the same virtues as our own pioneers.

They were so poor at first that the name "Costa Rica" was an irony. And while large land-holdings were built up here and there later, and even encouraged to a certain extent, in order to push coffee-growing, the communal lands with which each village started its existence were broken up into small holdings by various public-spirited executives, until Costa Rica, compared with some of its more mediæval neighbors, could almost be spoken of as a land of peasant proprietors. Doctor Dana G. Munro, at one time chief of the Latin American Division of our State Department, remarks in his "The Five Central American Republics" that in 1906 Costa Rica, with its less than 500,000 people, had 110,201 different private properties, the average value of which was less than $500.

Shut away from the other republics by mountain and jungle, the Costa Ricans were able to go about their business without constantly being overrun by filibusters or drawn into the rows and military adventures of their stronger neighbors, as has always been the case, for example, with weaker Honduras. Their coffee, which they began to export in the thirties, soon acquired a reputation and commanded a superior price which it still maintains. Without the dead weight of an alien and listless Indian population to lift, the schools which the more enlightened presidents encouraged had something to work on, and there is now said to be a school for every thirty Costa Rican children.

The shifts of president were frequently made by a show of force, but the Costa Rican "revolutions" have been "palace revolutions" rather than stand-up fights

in the field, and even the former are unfashionable. Since the beginning of this century, indeed, Costa Rica has been as grown up in this respect as the three big "ABC" powers of South America. And while political parties are still cliques grouped round outstanding personalities rather than parties in the English or American understanding of the word, speech is free, newspapers and party-leaders can lambaste the group in power, the elections are held after much vociferous controversy on all sides, and are probably as free and fair as they well could be among a people of Spanish descent, who, a short century ago, suddenly took over bodily the exotic forms of so-called democratic government.

Foreigners came in, with their capital and superior business organization, but they mingled with and married the upper-class natives more than in the other republics. It wasn't a case of the outsider "taking" the country, at least up in the Meseta Central, and the majority of the coffee-plantations are still held by Costa Ricans. In short, Costa Rica may be looked on as a fairly "finished" example of a tropical American republic; not a Holland or a Denmark, to be sure, but with a good many reasons for considering itself the tropical equivalent of the little independent nations of the Old World.

II

In a Pullman, the name usually given to the sketchy little parlor-cars hitched to regular trains for the benefit of the local élite and exacting foreigners, we rolled quickly through the banana-plantations and up the valley of the tawny, tumbling Reventazon. English names; Jamaica negroes and their huts; sad eyes in black faces,

suddenly flashing into white teeth and rollicking laughter; jungle and steamy air dropped below, and the air became thinner and cooler.

The train skirted cascades and rapids of boiling yellow water, trailed across spider-web bridges and along mountain flanks from which one looked across yawning green canyons of opaque verdure. The little engine would pant up one slope and go scuttling down the next; bear down on a sharp turn as if it would certainly hop off into space, grind down its brakes just in time, squeal round the bend, and so off for the next one. It is all simple and amusing enough now, but it was anything but simple when Minor C. Keith began the line in 1871, and an army of laborers gave their lives to the hot country before the road was finally finished up to the capital nearly twenty years later.

The banana-plants grow smaller and paler, but they do not cease, as a matter of fact, even in the highlands, amongst corn and cabbages and dairy cattle, and some of the younger coffee-growers are using them as shade for their coffee-sprouts clear up to the lower mountain-tops. The bananas grown here are small and dry, but they ship well, will "do" for Europe, and the young *finqueros* use them to help out until their coffee is grown, just as Northern orchardists plant vegetables between their young fruit-trees.

One of these new *finqueros*—a good many have gone to the tropics since the War—was aboard our train, an American in pith helmet and whites, who had come down to the port to meet his mother, one of those indomitable old ladies who prefer plantation life to "civilization" in city flats, and would put her more than seventy years astride a mule, after a few days' rest in San

José, to climb to their coffee finca in the Turrialba country.

There was also a young Chilean secretary of legation, with luggage plastered with European labels and the very evident intention of leaving no stone unturned to make a good impression in his new post. Everybody knows everybody else in these little countries, and when a young lady with the *mondaine* air of the daughter of one of the better families joined us about half-way to the capital she naturally found that the Chilean's hosts were her friends, and was soon describing, with politely restrained vivacity, some entertainment of the day before.

How delightful it always is, after a long vacation from them, to hear well-bred people gossiping with each other in the Latin tongues and manner! Matter may or may not be there, but manner always is, and something of the prestidigitateur's art. Each phrase or idea has its sequence of gesture, something with a beginning, a middle, and an end, almost a sort of "curtain," and often a touch of the "*Pouf!*—and there you are!"

Our own laconic grunting seems clumsy enough, and it is quite a relief to one's vanity, if something of a shock, when the train stops and the words become audible, to find that the engaging young lady is saying no more than "After that came fried eggs, fried bananas, beefsteak, tomato salad, pastries, and everything you can think of! . . . "

We lunched at a railroad eating-house, kept by an American and exactly like a twenty-minutes-for-dinner place at home; passed *mestiza* women selling fried chicken and *tortillas*—one young girl with her poor little brown nose quite white with powder, "civilization"

just touching her there as it is touching Central America itself, and leaving her ragged clothes and dull, sad eyes just as they were. Then, over the rim at last, and down into that smiling broad valley, some four thousand feet above the sea, in which the capital, San José, and the towns of Cartago, Alajuela, and Heredia lie, and most of the Costa Ricans live.

We passed ancient Cartago, the colonial capital and the seat of Mr. Carnegie's ill-starred peace palace, shaken down by the earthquake of 1910, as the Central American Court of Justice which occupied it was no less thoroughly shaken down by the combined egoism of the five republics and ourselves. And here, about an hour's ride from the capital, the hotel-runners clambered enthusiastically aboard to drum up trade.

I recalled, from the visit of 1913, an excellent little hotel kept by a formidable and vivacious French woman, whose food was so good that even our legation secretary preferred to board there, to practise his French and let madame spoil him and give him twice as many pieces of sugared pineapple as the rest of us. One evening, after dinner, madame and he and I were standing in the street doorway, madame idly swinging by its ring an enormous key, big enough for the Bastille.

"And what does that unlock?" he asked.

"*C'est le clef à Paradis!*" murmured madame, with a far-away smile. . . .

Recalling this little episode across a chasm of fourteen years, and hearing that a new and more elaborate Hotel Français had been built in the meantime, I was minded to go there. But the runner, who happened to be from the Europa, put up a warning hand as if to save the stranger from some terrible fate.

He had nothing against the proprietor of the Français, he said; the latter was his friend and an excellent fellow; but, looking at the matter objectively, what, precisely, were the facts? With firstlies and secondlies, he then ran rapidly through the features common to hotels in general and finally approached the cuisine.

Who was the first cook at the Français? Up shot an index-finger. *Un negro!* And the second cook? Up shot a middle finger. *Un negro!* The third cook? *Un negro!* Whereas, in the Europa, when dinner-time came round, the proprietor himself buckled on an apron and went into the kitchen! At this he made a quick horizontal gesture, with the air of one shooting a bolt or cutting something off for good and all. Then, with the smile of one who was no longer a stranger or mere salesman but a fellow amateur, he hit the note which none could resist.

"The Français, you understand, señor, is new, *para el turismo*. In the Europa you have the flavor of the country, *la vida de famiglia!*" So, naturally, with the runner sitting triumphantly on the box, we clattered down San José's long main street to his incomparable little hotel.

There is "nothing to see," in the European sense of the word, in this little city of thirty or forty thousand people—neither museums, nor antiquities, nor architecture—any more than in any of the other Central American capitals. Earthquakes, let alone the comparative poverty of the people, take care of the architecture and almost compel the building of low, fortress-like structures; and it is pleasanter to sleep, whatever the æsthetic sacrifices, under a roof of light corrugated iron than under the more idiomatic red tiles. To be sure, San

José has its National Theatre, and the Frenchy foyer, with its lounges and mirrors, looks impressive in photographs. But the National Theatre, with its frescos of Italianized Costa Ricans picking coffee in Italianized Costa Rican landscapes, was a gesture, an offering to the gods of vanity and display, raised during a time of great local prosperity, rather than an example of indigenous art. And with movies many, and visiting theatrical companies few and far between, it is actually more a place for balls and charitable entertainments than a state theatre in the usual sense.

Time was when the band concert in the plaza was a place for seeing "everybody," but here, as elsewhere, this pretty and slightly formal spectacle, with the carefully chaperoned *señoritas* promenading in one direction and the visibly and audibly admiring men folks in the other, seems to be going the way of the old-time late-afternoon carriage-parade. I remember the Parque Morazán, on the summer evening when I first dropped into the Costa Rican capital, with the smart band playing really good music, and the pretty Josefinas—they had a way in those days of wearing their dark, rippling hair loose but for perhaps one restraining ribbon, with part of it hanging down their backs, and part flung over one shoulder—following, two by two, close on each other's heels, dangerously demure, like pictures done by Degas.

But this time the Parque Morazán was quite another scene. The band concert had evidently become quite démodé, an ill-assorted herd milled aimlessly about; and, drifting along with one ring and peering at the other for some signs of that other evening, I had the sentimentalist's usual reward and found myself staring into

the somewhat sardonic eyes of my hotel chambermaid.

So when you have strolled through the central plaza and the little cathedral and San José's main street, and seen the Union Club, post-office, market, and possibly the very clean and well-arranged public hospital, you have just about "done" the town that the casual outsider sees. The real life of the town, as in most other small Spanish-American cities, is behind the barred windows and round about the pleasant flower-filled patios which most strangers never get into, and the real "show" places, here as elsewhere in Central America, are not so much the towns at all as volcanoes and mountain trails and coffee fincas that are perhaps a day or two away from the capital.

Yet San José has a certain personality, nevertheless. It may be the polite little bootblack in the plaza who whistles "Valencia" as he industriously gives your shoes a *lustrar;* or the church half-open at the sides, with the birds singing in the trees outside as the dark-veiled women come in to confess their sins and pray to their favorite saints; the caressing springlike mornings and silent mountain nights; the book-shop windows with their really interesting and unexpected books; the schoolgirls in their neat dark-blue and white dresses; the rather scholarly-looking elderly gentlemen who seem to find the time and mood to greet each other leisurely and to pass the time of day; the young folks poring over the books and periodicals in the public-library reading-room at night—in any case, a lot of small and more or less impalpable things combine to fit into that characteristic "nice little" Costa Rican air and give the stranger a sense of something grown-up and rather urbane which he does not find in quite the same degree in the other capitals.

IN THE PLAZA AT SAN JOSÉ DE COSTA RICA ON A SUNDAY MORNING.

FOYER OF THE NATIONAL THEATRE IN THE COSTA RICAN CAPITAL.

You cannot look at the shop-windows or glance at the newspapers—less given to languor and poetry, and more to syndicated and picked-up matter from the States, than they used to be—without feeling the steady, insistent push of that restless world north of the Caribbean. The Costa Ricans are constantly informed that Lucky Strike cigarettes are toasted and do not hurt the throat—"*estan tostados, protegen su garganta.*" Sometimes the advertisements of American products are adapted to local habits or points of view—thus "Crema dentifrica Colgate" is introduced without any reference to the United States at all. The unsuspecting Costa Ricans are told that "all well-born people in Spain" acquire that dental radiance so essential to social success by using a preparation known as "Crema dentifrica Colgate," and that what is so dear to the beautiful ladies of the mother country is no less open to the "*bellas de esta localidad.*"

But, quite as often, the ingenuous advertising agents simply make literal translations of the publicity used at home, and American cereals are urged on the inhabitants of the drowsiest tropical towns with the familiar appeals to men of force and action whose "*preoccupaciones le consumen tantas energias*" and who need some magical means of retaining their vigor amidst the frightful strains of modern city life.

Indeed, they have almost "everything" here in San José now. Motor-cars, public and private, crowd and make noisy the once peaceful and quiet streets of the little capital. Far up on the slopes of the volcano of Irazu, where it is cold enough for several blankets at night, folks dance to radio music picked up from New York. There are all sorts of foreign things in the San José shop-windows, from caviare to grape-nuts.

Here, for example, lugged across the States, across the Gulf, through the customs, and all the way from the banana country up to this highland capital is—of all things—a package of corn flakes!

Now, Costa Rica is by nature a corn-eating country. Maize will grow here in the upper levels, and wheat, generally speaking, will not. *Tortillas* made of ground corn used to be, and in most parts of Central America still are, the customary bread. In the capital you rarely see them now. Even in the country white bread made of imported flour is becoming more and more the regular thing.

It isn't necessary to overemphasize the corn flakes. Luxuries of that sort are not intended for the majority in any case. But here they are, at least, and when you consider just how luxurious, measured in nutritive value, corn flakes are up here in the tropical cordilleras (about, let us say, like electric fans among the Eskimos), they will serve as a symbol of something now going on in this little Central American world, a process which nothing apparently can stop and which is as revolutionary as it is inevitable.

What, in the long run, pays for all these imports—all the things, from motor-cars to Cincinnati candles, which a highly industrialized nation, aided by modern salesmanship, is forcing a little agricultural corner of the tropics, which used to be practically self-supporting in its pastoral way, to think that it wants and needs?

(For the tropics, with all their countless millions of simple-minded humans, who may, perhaps, be educated to become less simple and less satisfied, and thus to absorb the overproduction of the industrialized temperate zones, are the one bright hope left for salesmanship.)

Roughly speaking, all these imports are paid for by coffee. Except for bananas, which are exported almost exclusively by an American corporation, coffee is the only considerable thing with which Costa Rica can bargain with the rest of the world. It is good coffee and commands a high price. The higher, therefore, the standard of living is raised, the more wants that are created, the stronger will be the pressure to grow coffee, to grow it on a large and organized rather than on a small and personal scale, and the less will people be tempted to grow other things, such as corn, beans, rice, etc., which the country naturally uses for food. And the more coffee-growing is done on a large and organized scale—*i. e.*, industrialized—the more will the Costa Rican peasant-proprietor tend to become a simple wage-earner. And this process—which is nobody's fault and which nothing apparently can stop—is already under way. Corn, beans, and rice are imported from New Orleans. Most of the chauffeurs who now hang around the plaza looking for a fare used to work little farms of their own out in the hills.

As long as the price of coffee keeps high things may go well enough, notwithstanding. But if the price drops, then everything in a one-crop country drops with it. And, even at best, a little tropical country like Costa Rica has this personal handicap—that she is buying the manufactured articles of industrialized countries at the special prices which such goods inevitably fetch when dragged up to her comparatively remote highlands, and she is paying for them in an agricultural product which sells at a world price based, as the prices of all tropical products are based, on the assumption that they are produced with something closely akin to slave labor.

The laborer on a Costa Rican coffee finca gets about two colones—50 cents a day. Fifty years ago he got half as much and with that half he could buy several times as much as he can now. He raised most of his own food, his wife ground the *tortillas*, made candles and soap, and sometimes cloth. Now, with wages far below those of the American laborer, he must buy at least part of these things at prices higher than even the American laborer himself pays.

And yet, as things go in the American tropics, Costa Rica is well off. She is the only one of the Central American republics in which the transition from the old Spanish patriarchal-ecclesiastical society to a "capitalistic" society has been made imperceptibly and without distress.

She has accepted capitalism in the sense that instead of a peon class, living and working practically as serfs or slaves but with a certain vested right in the common land, she has developed a population of small proprietors who own their little farms and if they sell them must shift for themselves. And she is facing the attack that western Europe and the United States settled long ago, the invasion of an industrialism which, it would appear, she must either practise herself to a certain degree or else give up her economic independence. (A young American woman had actually been brought down by a public-spirited San José banker, mainly to start occupational therapy for the insane, but partly to endeavor to revive Costa Rican weaving and other home industries —just as Gandhi tried to do in India.) In any case, behind all this "progress"—the automobiles, silk stockings, etc.—lie serious changes and readjustments for the little coffee state.

If the situation superficially sketched here be transferred to the other republics, including Mexico—states still living, economically, nearer the Middle Ages than Costa Rica—it is not difficult to see causes of "unrest." Much is said about revolutions in Central America—that is to say, adventurous attempts by local chiefs to seize the central power. But the real and tragic revolution in these pastoral countries, for which nobody is to blame and which no amount of good-will on either side can stop, is the industrial revolution which came to most of the rest of the Western world a century or so ago.

The facts here suggested might well get more attention in discussions of inter-American relations at home. That a professional Bolshevik, like Madame Kollentay, for instance, might take advantage of them and of her presence as ambassadress to Mexico to try to stir up her specific type of trouble is understandable. But there is plenty of material for so-called Bolshevism without any Russian help.

III

I put these notions as if they were my own, and, indeed, something of the sort must strike any one who gets at all beneath the surface of things in Central America, but old hands in Costa Rica will doubtless smile a bit and see the traveller lolling back in one of the library easy chairs, smoking one of the formidable if mellifluous cigars, and listening to the urbane and learned conversation of Mr. John Keith.

"Mister John," as they called him in San José, appropriately merging in his case, as Mr. Keith merged in his own life, the Spanish and American idioms (even as these words were being written the cables brought

the news of his sudden death) was a member of that redoubtable American family of which Mr. Minor C. Keith, builder of the railroad from Puerto Limon to San José, founder of the United Fruit Company, and dreamer of that continental railroad which will one day unite all the Americas, is perhaps the best-known member, and which has given its imagination and energy to the building up of the American tropics for the past half-century.

Going to Costa Rica many years ago, he married a Costa Rican lady, brought up a family there, and became, with the years and the service he gave his adopted country, one of its first citizens and almost a sort of national institution. He was "in" and "on" all the charitable boards and committees of welcome to distinguished guests, and, at once the scholar and practical business man, he would sit in his library, surrounded by everything ever written about tropical America from the days of the Spanish conquest down, and talk of its history and its people and problems as almost nobody else could.

At once a "good American" and a "good Costa Rican," he had a foot in two worlds in more senses than one, and while prospering as a banker and still active in a banking business which doubtless charged its clients a perfectly businesslike rate of interest for its loans, he surveyed the "capitalistic system" from as detached an intellectual view-point and criticised its weaknesses and dangers with as much relish as if he were some enthusiastic subeditor of a radical review.

Did you wish to hear of the constructive side of that Spanish conquest—the last fling, in the New World, of a mediævalism already breaking down in the Old—

as well as its somewhat overadvertised cruelties; of domestic animals and plants introduced—it must be recalled that the Central Americans had no burden-carriers and the South Americans none stronger than the frail llama; of Christian churches and monasteries built in the most inaccessible spots all the way from California to Chile, and schools and universities founded when North Americans were still, so to speak, hanging by their tails from the trees; of Indians that were made citizens and more or less assimilated, instead of being simply killed off; and of a patriarchal system of landownership and labor which, however "undemocratic," at any rate was fairly well adapted to work under conditions as they were?

Of the difference between the tropics as viewed from the cold countries—as Gardens of Eden where one simply picks his living from the trees—and the actual tropics, especially in tangled, up-and-down countries like Central America, where the destructive forces of heat, insects, disease, rains, rust, and rot, constantly "impinge," as "Mister John" was so fond of saying, on the constructive efforts of man? How many of our instinctive American notions of the blessedness of work, of inalienable freehold rights in land, etc., are founded on "absolute" facts and how much on the chance facts that the North American pioneers settled in a healthful, temperate climate, with unlimited amounts of easily accessible, level, and fertile land?

Of all these things "Mister John" would tell you, slowly puffing, one after another, his formidable black cigars, with a wealth of illustration and reference that you could get in few places else. An "institution," indeed—and that, of course, is my only excuse for drag-

ging in here a personal friend—a Northerner who had lived his tropical romance instead of merely dreaming it, and, instead of talking or writing of "pan-Americanism" and the *entente cordiale*, had worked it out in his own life and that of his children.

One of "Mister John's" numerous family connections is another American, whom I may perhaps be permitted to mention, with similar apologies, as another example of the American who goes to the Caribbean countries and successfully makes his home there.

In 1913, when I climbed, or rather rode, to the top of the Volcano of Poas, which lies above the town of Alajuela, twenty or thirty miles down the valley from San José, I stopped en route at a coffee finca on the outskirts of Alajuela managed by Mr. Jerome Clark.

He was a young American, who, after learning Spanish and getting a touch of the tropics in Cuba, had been invited to come down and manage a foreign-owned coffee-plantation in Costa Rica, and had promptly left his office job in San Francisco and taken the chance. A pleasanter combination of tropical ease and Northern business, it struck me then, would have been hard to find.

He and his wife and young children lived in a comfortable bungalow, from the screened veranda of which one looked out over lemon and orange-trees to the mountains, which the family used as a week-end picnic-ground. There was good water-power on the place, as so often happens in this up-and-down country, and in addition to its coffee the plantation had a sawmill and made a specialty of the solid mahogany wheels used on the Costa Rican ox-carts. Knowing nothing of sawmills, the American had learned by watching his own

workmen, and presently introduced several notions of his own, among which was a sort of hay-baler for pressing the sawdust together with wet leaves into bricks for their boiler-furnace.

From an office man Clark had become planter, manufacturer, exporter, and amiable monarch of all he surveyed. He was out of doors practically all the time, and yet had enough men, machinery, and business to look after to keep him up to snuff. He had put in a little home-made golf-course and tennis-courts, and some pleasant English people rode over for tea frequently from a neighboring plantation. In short, about the only thing he had to worry about was that perennial problem of the American abroad, the education of his children.

The War has changed so many things, everywhere, that one never knows what may have happened; but on turning up in San José again I promptly ran into my former host—banker, coffee-broker, and steamship-agent now, as well as *finquero*, and with an ex-service man in his former place as manager of the coffee finca. The automobile, which also had come in, in the meantime, had converted the plantation from a farm, half a day's journey away by railway and mule, to a country place almost in San José's suburbs. Clark spent his week-ends and any other days he wished there, and the rest of the time in the capital. He missed the theatres and the sort of intellectual brushing up one gets in a place like New York, but, like most men who go in for ranching or a planter's life, thought of great cities as places to which you can go, occasionally, stuff yourself with this or that, and then hurry back to real life in the country again.

The rainy—that is to say, the coffee-growing—season having come, he was just leaving, as coffee-planters so generally do, for his summer vacation in the North, which was to include a motor trip through Spain before his return for the coffee-picking in the late autumn. The education problem had been solved for at least one of the children, for she had gone back to the States to school and, returning to Costa Rica, had married her old playmate, one of the sons of "Mister John," just back from Dartmouth. And there is your Costa Rican-American saga, or at any rate the beginning of it! . . .

IV

Poas, which is about a day's mule-back ride from the Clark plantation, is one of the two volcanoes—Irazu is the other—within easy reach of the capital. Poas is a crater of boiling mud, the rim of which is about 9,000 feet above the sea; while Irazu, which is round about 12,000 feet above sea-level, pours out smoke and steam and is the highest point in Costa Rica. The slopes of both are so gradual that mules can take you all the way to the top, and tourists nowadays, with the help of motor-cars, can reach the summit of either and get back to San José in two days.

In 1913, the climber had to look out for mules and for himself, but he saw, perforce, more of the people along the way. At the little village of San Pedro, part way up from Clark's finca, where I spent the night, then, the local dignitary, a baker and small farmer to whom I had been recommended, received me with great courtesy, at once conducted me to his best room, took my hat, and embarked on a discussion of the state of the world.

People were wasting their time on politics as usual, he complained—it was in the middle of the presidential campaign. "Pigs!" was his word for those who were filling the San José papers with their "adhesions" for and "protests" against the several candidates, and he showed me with a satirical grin letters from all three candidates, asking his support and telling what they needed in the way of funds. He was curious to know how I had contrived to travel so far from home, and remarked that all Americans were rich. However, it took at least a million dollars to make you rich in the United States, whereas the old fellow who owned the *lechería*, or dairy, farther up on the slopes of Poas, was rich for Costa Rica, and he had only 50,000 colones, or about $20,000. When I spoke of writing for the papers, he said that he had read about a very distinguished American *periodista*, named Franklin, who had written an almanac, and, though extremely *sencillo* in his manners and way of life, was wise and had been ambassador to France.

He showed me his bake-ovens and escorted me finally to what passed for the village hotel. Twilight gathered, and a crowd of small boys began to kick a football round the plaza green. Two girls with black mantas over their head, belles of lonely San Pedro, began to stroll round the plaza, plainly curious about the mysterious stranger in khaki sitting on the curb. From a house at one corner of the plaza a priest in his black robe emerged, lit a cigar, and, sauntering over to the stone steps of the little church, sat down there and gazed out over the valley.

I joined him there, and we chatted of the volcano and other things. He was a handsome, dark young

fellow, with quick, intelligent eyes. I asked him if it were lonesome in San Pedro and he sighed and admitted that there were few "*distracciones*." Wouldn't I like to see his house, perhaps? It was the best in the village, with a kerosene-lamp instead of the usual candles, and a piano, books, and rocking-chairs. As I was to be off at three in the morning, however, I left early, and had scarcely got on the street before, behind the closed curtains, the young padre was playing the piano for dear life.

The matting on the "hotel" cot was hard and full of fleas, and it was after a dreary space of wakefulness that the old landlady came in with a candle and a cup of coffee and said that it was three and time to be off. Merely by crossing the threshold from the stuffy and flea-ridden bedroom, one stepped into another world. The tropical mountain night fairly blazed about us, moon and stars hung low, there was not a whisper nor a candle-light, the white walls of the houses shone in the moonlight, and the volcano itself stood out clear as cardboard against the sky.

The air was cool and fresh, as if just washed with rain, yet with the tropic's caressing softness; and the mules pattered briskly over the cobblestones and out on the trail, soft as dampened tan-bark. It had been hollowed out by years of torrential rains into a deep gully, the sides of which rose well above our heads. With only the pleasant creaking of saddle-leather, the rim of the road in the moonlight, and we in the dark, we started climbing. Several times, when the gully opened out to a broader road, the warm, sweet, animal-like smell of crushed cane and boiling syrup came down the wind, and we passed little *trapiches*, or fam-

ily sugar-mills, with a pine knot blazing alongside the bubbling tank or through the slits in the rows of vertical poles which passed for walls. One caught the lazy mutterings of the sugar-makers, perhaps the pat-pat-pat of *tortillas*, a dog barked, and then the walled-in road shut us in again.

Emerging at last above the trees, we could look down on the whole beautiful valley of the Meseta Central. Two or three thousand feet below it stretched from Cartago, to the north, down through the capital and Alajuela, to Grecia and Heredia, to the southwest. For seventy miles, about, one could survey that concave plateau, white in the moonlight, with the larger towns and villages sparkling jewels.

Higher we climbed, the mules beginning to sweat now, and presently the moonlight began to yield to the harder light of the morning. For a while the two faced each other, sharing the world. You could have read print by the approaching sunlight, while the moon still flung black shadows into it. And then, with the issue still uncertain, off in the northwest, over a vast bank of cumulous clouds, the lightning of the rainy season began to play. Under these three lights we rode, then gradually the mountains across the valley behind us flattened into silhouettes, with cottony layers of cloud lying flat across them, and then, suddenly, it was cold.

We were now in the pasture country of the upper levels, and, though one could almost have tossed a stone to the tropics, we might, so far as temperature went, have been ascending a New England hillside in late November. The trees had almost gone, we were riding through rocky meadows, and down from the

heights ahead of us a cold wind blew a gale. The mules were all but blown sidewise, and the mule-boy and I took off our hats and tucked them under our arms. The cold white light of morning came up in earnest now.

We passed the *lechería*,—the 50,000-colone dairyman standing there mixing cheese with his bare hands,—and into timber again, and curiously enough a veritable jungle. It was, I suppose, one of those high-level forests which you find frequently in the Central American mountains, moisture and constant fogs more than making up for altitude. Moss and orchids covered the trees, creepers and lianas hung from and crawled over them, great roots sprawled over the swampy ground, and there were little pits and sink-holes into which the mules slipped to their knees.

The rain began, as in the rainy season it so quickly does along the peaks, with daylight. I was snug enough in a long saddle slicker, but the poor mule-boy, with nothing but his thin cotton shirt, was soon chattering with the cold. We splashed through several ponds and swamps,—miniature dead cones they appeared to be,—up and up, and finally the boy pointed down and said: "There!"

In front of us was a whirling curtain of fog and rain, but suddenly through it emerged a vast pit, half a mile across perhaps, and as deep, bare, scarred and sulphurous, with a lake at the bottom—as agreeably creeply a place to come out on, in the howling winds and rain of an early morning, as one could wish.

Poas is in more or less constant activity. Every now and then the cloudy green lake at the bottom boils up, a geyser-like column is thrown as high as the rim, to fall back with a thundering roar. I was told of vari-

ous people who had had narrow escapes while poking about the crater during such eruptions—one an elderly Costa Rican who had a notion that bathing in the crater lake was good for his rheumatism; but the young *mozo's* teeth were chattering like castanets, it was anything but an agreeable morning for experiments, and so we soon boarded our mules again and hurried down. A bit below the *lechería* we ran out of the belt of rain, and San Pedro, when we reached it, was baking in the full heat of mid-afternoon. A leaden cap hung over Poas, however, and was still hanging there when we trailed back to the Clarks' late that day, just in time for a bath and afternoon tea.

V

The *adhesiones* and *protestas*, of which my San Pedro baker friend had spoken, are a characteristic novelty of Costa Rican elections, and as local politics become quiescent during the intervals between presidential campaigns—they were thus during my last visit, with Don Ricardo Jimenez sitting tranquilly in the little palace—it may be worth while to recall some of the incidents of that earlier trip.

There were three candidates in the field,—Don Rafael Iglesias, Don Maximo Fernandez, and Doctor Carlos Duran,—each with his party label and color, and the papers printed daily lists of new *directivas* or local party centres, with the *adhesiones* of those who were for, and the *protestas* of those against. Sometimes, when the prospective voter could not write, these were signed by the local party scout, with the added phrase, "for so-and-so, *qui no sabe firmar*."

The local significance of these lists was suggested by a cartoon in one of the humorous papers, in which Don Rafael, the National Union candidate, was pictured as a rooster, whose feathers, labelled *protestas*,

"THE COCK CROWS EVEN THOUGH HE HAS LOST HIS FEATHERS."

were moulting into two pails, labelled "Duranism" and "Fernandism." But Don Rafael was flapping his wings, nevertheless, and assuring the world that, though he hadn't a feather left, he still had a body, and could crow and was to be reckoned with.

Then they have the lottery-drawing in the centre of the plaza, while some of the younger ladies promenade round and round in the sunshine, two by two, in their best clothes, and then it is time for lunch. Meanwhile, out on the Sabana, dozens of teams are playing football, a few elegant young natives are practising polo, and most of the foreigners are playing golf.

That brisk and cheerful Sabana, with its bright, soft airs and beautiful distant mountains, was almost my last glimpse of San José, for early next morning we were off on the Pacific train for the ride down to Punta Arenas. It is perhaps even more like an airplane flight than the ride up from Puerto Limon, along similar green canyons and over spider-web bridges spun across terrific drops.

One isn't conscious, in the kindly air of the highlands, of being at an altitude, but as the train rolls down the western slope, and vegetation thickens and the air becomes fragrant and moist like the air of a hothouse, everything within and about one seems pleasantly to relax. The mood is as definite as that sense of well-being which steals through a tired man slipping into a hot bath, but more subtle and penetrating. Something smiling and careless, something drowsy and sensual, creeps into the marrow of one's bones.

How amiable and likable seems this rich, warm, and fragrant world into the lap of which one is lazily descending! Delicious, dripping slices of pineapple, quite another fruit altogether from the corrosive vegetable generally found on Northern tables, are offered the passengers at every station. Amiable peasants hack off the husks from green cocoanuts, drop a straw into one of the opened "eyes" and hand them up to you to drink.

There are saffron-red papayas, and mangoes, their bursting skins sticky with resinous juice, and they are sold by smiling girls, with flesh-like tropical fruit, which remains cool and unchanged under a sun which would burn the bare shoulders of a white woman like naked flame.

To work in these steamy foot-hills may be gruelling enough, but to drift idly down through them in an open-windowed train is one of the most beguiling amusements. Even the buzzards undergo a metamorphosis under the disarming caresses of the tropical morning. Doubtless they would, as the fiction-writers are always telling us, pick out one's eyes, if one were lying helplessly wounded on a battle-field. But after all lying wounded on a battle-field is an infrequent occupation, even in Central America, while the buzzards are always here picking up man's refuse—even man's own discarded body—as if somehow dedicated to a life of constant and continuous self-sacrifice. Poor devils, one thought, so ugly and so awkward, so solemn and so sad; rising heavily; hopping as if overweighted; well-intentioned philanthropists, cursed with bad faces, staring up at one, as the train got under way, with their look of faithful, questioning hounds!

And then, finally, the sea; shacks, cocoanut-palms, sand, and sloppiness; *cargadores*, customs' men, visas, and the sweat pouring down your body before you've moved fifty yards from the train. It costs seven colones to come all the way down from San José; two or three times that to work through porters, wharf and launch charges, and what-not—but, after all, what is a port for?—and out to the steamer, loading from lighters in the roadstead.

She was to lie there until the next afternoon, and the other passengers had to hunt a hotel, but, for once in a lifetime, a line from a friend in the home office had preceded me, and this not only wafted me aboard at once but up to a sort of guest's stateroom on the bridge-deck beside the captain. Nobody might come up here but the captain's boy; one could roam about in one's pajamas in the velvet dark, and when I turned out at five, in the hush of the tropic dawn, there were the sea and the distant palm-fringed beach and the mountains climbing all the way up to the capital, all in one's private kingdom. Who wouldn't be a ship's master in the tropics on mornings like this!

Immense cumulous clouds, left over from the thunder and rain of the late afternoon before, were piled up in the west, their summits just lighted now by the approaching sun. The sea underneath and between was glassy-smooth and stirred only by a slight oily swell; and across it a string of pelicans flapped low and slowly, in single file. To the east rose the continental wall, the mountains down which we had slid the day before, with lead-blue rain-clouds and fog in level white strips; and at their feet the beach and the little town, still half asleep, almost black under its drooping palms, with here and there a languid spiral of blue wood smoke rising from some breakfast fire.

The pelicans were the only thing visibly alive in that hushed, fragrant, silent, and exquisitely peaceful world. The eight of them, in single file, would settle slowly, planing down to a perfect landing, and then, as if some trident-bearing, subsurface policeman had ordered them on, laboriously begin their flapping again. In dawns like these, especially from the deck of a ship a bit off the

beach, the tropics show all their gentleness and seduction and none of their harshness and cruelty. And their spell is all the stronger in the rainy season. For every afternoon or evening it rains, and probably thunders and blows a gale. Palms bend, the sheets of warm rain thresh the huddled world, the wind may even carry a chill in it. You fall asleep to the steady pelt of rain on water perhaps, and then awake into one of these exquisite dawns, rising fresh and virginal, as if it were the first morning in the world.

TROUBLED NICARAGUA

CHAPTER IV

TROUBLED NICARAGUA

I

Nicaragua is smaller than Illinois, although more than twice as big as Costa Rica and four times as big as Holland, but one would never think of applying the "nice little" to it, nevertheless.

Geography, history, and various other influences have made it very different from that compact little community which inhabits Costa Rica's Meseta Central. The lack of an interoceanic railroad or of any convenient highway leaves the east—the old Mosquito Coast—in almost a different country from the west coast, and even to-day it is generally both easier and quicker to go from Bluefields or Graytown to the capital all the way round by the Panama Canal than to try to cut cross-country.

Its principal towns—Leon, Grenada, Managua—instead of being up in the cool highlands, are strung along what was first the route for colonial trade between the west coast and Spain, by way of the San Juan River and the lakes, and later the route for gold-hunters on their way across the Isthmus to and from California. And Leon and Grenada, and the so-called Liberals of the one and the Conservatives of the other have again divided the country into two armed camps, which have fought each other for the central power with a stubborn bitterness more like the rivalries between mediæval clans than anything usually found to-day between different sections of the same country.

The mixture of blood—Spanish and Indian, with touches of African, especially in the hot country—is more complete here, as it is in Honduras and Salvador, than either in "white" Costa Rica or comparatively "Indian" Guatemala. And, instead of the small farmers characteristic of Costa Rica's central table-land, one finds most of the politically conscious Nicaraguans centred in the towns. In and about Grenada are the old, "conservative" merchant and planter families and their dependents and retainers, while the larger town of Leon is the centre for the professional and artisan class which gives a certain flavor of reality to the term "liberal."

These party and family feuds—for neither Liberals nor Conservatives have ever found it easy to agree even on their own candidates for president—heightened and dragged out, as they have been, by the effective distance between the east and west coasts, together with the fact that Nicaragua has always offered one, and possibly the best, of the two routes for an interoceanic canal, made foreign intervention of one sort or another more likely than in the other republics, and on several occasions since the Panama Canal was built, almost compelled it.

It was with the possibilities of a canal in mind that Great Britain exerted a sort of protectorate over the "Mosquito Kingdom" of the east coast, in theory until 1860 and in practice until 1894. It was in Nicaragua, in the fifties, that the American filibuster William Walker, invited thither by one of the factions warring for the presidency, and encouraged in the United States by those who hoped to see Nicaragua annexed to this country, or at least to have the system of slavery extended there, took things into his own hands, after the fashion of the heroes of the Caribbean stories of

Richard Harding Davis, and "made himself king" or at any rate president.

In 1909 the United States, by its frank support of the revolution which had broken out against the Liberal president Zelaya, who had ruled Nicaragua more or less tyranically for sixteen years, forced Zelaya's resignation and prevented any of his followers from succeeding him in the presidency. From 1912 to 1925 the United States, after invading Nicaragua and crushing a revolution, maintained a so-called Legation Guard at Managua, which, though quiescent after the manner of a fire department when not in action, effectually prevented any outbreaks against the country's peace. In 1926-27 the United States again intervened forcibly in the affairs of Nicaragua, stopped a long-drawn-out civil war between the two traditional parties, and announced that its forces would police the country at least until a fair and free election, which it would endeavor to guarantee, had taken place.

In short, it is only necessary to run over, in the briefest way, the Nicaraguan story, and without going into such details as the greater or less control which Americans have exercised over Nicaraguan customs, railroads, and finance, or the controversy and criticism which have accompanied these phenomena, to see that here is a very different "layout" from that in Costa Rica, and a long road still to travel before the national household is similarly in order.

II

We raised the lazily smoking cone of old Momotombo, and presently sailed into the harbor of Corinto, twenty-four hours out from Punta Arenas, and a few

days before President Coolidge's personal representative, the Honorable Henry L. Stimson, by the terse argument that the United States forces were prepared to accept any arms from either side that might be turned in and to take by force those that weren't, stopped the civil war between the Liberal forces of Doctor Sacasa and the Conservative government forces of President Diaz.

Three small American cruisers were in Corinto harbor, and its waters were alive with their launches and shore-boats, landing marines and shopping about for fruit and fresh vegetables. A big motor whale-boat, manned by three or four bare-armed young gobs, with a light cargo of pineapples, mangoes, and alligator-pears, and a very evident consciousness that they were fulfilling their mission of joining the navy and seeing the world, bore down on us directly we let fall anchor. A tall, blond, very sunburnt young steersman stood erect in her stern, nonchalantly swinging her this way and that as she boomed along, "burning up Uncle Sam's gasoline," as our captain croaked, with the commercial sailor's slightly envious condescension for those who are able to make sea-going something between an art and a sort of sport.

"Where's your gangway?" bawled the steersman, and, getting no answer, swung round in a wide circle under our stern to come up at the foot of the stairs, now down and waiting for the Nicaraguan port doctor. Our yellow flag was still up, but one of the tow-headed youngsters had galloped half-way up the stairs before he paused under the truculent glare of a hard-boiled mate accustomed to bellow "steamboat Spanish" at half-breed stevedores all the way round the coast from Manzanillo to Cristobal.

"Got any mail?"

"Plenty of it."

"Anything for the *Des Moines?*"

"You'll get your mail when it's gone ashore! . . ." And, the gob still standing there, the mate flung down a "Better get away from that gangway, boy!"

Triumph for the merchant marine, retreat for the navy, with much foam and propeller-thunder, and loud talk of "spuds." Odd—or possibly not odd—this preoccupation of the bluejacket, as the traveller bumps into him in foreign ports, with collecting, retrieving, and discussing the lowly tuber. "Where the hell are those spuds? . . . The spuds ain't come yet—what the hell!"

Corinto is in the classical Central American style—heat that sends the sweat streaming down languid flesh; negro women squatting beside baskets of tropical fruit; palms and sand; smells of fried fish, salted herrings, and rum; a string of steamship agents under the waterfront arcades; behind that a long, unpaved street or two, divided between turf and ankle-deep dust; in the distance a string of sharp volcanoes fading off into the heat-shimmer.

It is still rated by our Consular Service as an "extra-hazardous post," but, what with the sanitary work initiated by the Rockefeller Foundation, tennis in the late afternoon, and a cool sea-breeze at night, it may be not half bad. At any rate, so thought the new American consul. He had lost about twenty pounds in his first six months, but, as he had just come from Dresden and too much good German beer, thought that probably it was just as well.

"Anyhow, I was glad enough to get some sun after

that infernal north German drizzle. Never felt better in my life! . . ."

After sundown, the populace come down in their best clothes and promenade round and round the deck of whatever passenger-ship happens to be tied up in port —just as people in the prairie towns at home come down to see the Overland Express go through—and next morning, at the first crack of dawn, a considerable portion of them are up to help you get away on the up-country train.

Central American trains don't run at night, and, to make the most of the daylight, generally start with the sun. They still follow the habit of travellers by mule, who get away while it is still dark generally, so as to be as far as possible down the trail before the sun begins to burn.

Coffee before sunup, the pat-pat of *tortillas* in the kitchen, the clatter of the mules on the patio cobble-stones, and the brisk getaway through the graying dark, with men and animals fresh and the first spears of the sun just striking the mountain-tops—that is part of every Central American traveller's morning.

It is a delicious hour, fragrant, cool, the more so as one knows how soon it will be burnt away. And you must have lived on the trail thus for a while and through the daily miracle of a succession of tropical mornings to realize how much so-called civilized man loses by his inane habit of stewing in bed until the best part of the day is gone.

Even train departures at sunup have a certain air of the theatre. In that hushed wilderness of tropical vegetation the bell and whistle of the little locomotive bring an amusing echo of northern machinery and noise—a

reminder that one can play with, so to speak, knowing that escape is always a few yards away on either side in the jungle. And you read the little local paper with as much excitement as if it were—what for the moment it is—the only bit of newsprint in the world, while the train passes barefooted peasant women swinging into market with baskets on their heads, or mule trains starting for coffee fincas or mines, and skirts the bare, burnt, rusted flanks of volcanoes, sinister in the strange pink and amethystine lights.

It thus skirts El Viejo ("The Old Fellow"), a beautiful cone about 6,000 feet high, just after leaving Corinto. And behind that, along the line of the Nicaraguan great lakes, are Momotombo and others, smoking and sleeping, a line of pyramids in a green desert. The lakes themselves were once part of the sea, and there are sharks in the fresh water of Lake Nicaragua now. Nicaragua is 100 miles long by about 45 miles wide, or about one-third the size of Lake Erie, and Managua, joined to it by a small river, is about 30 miles long. The San Juan River connects the eastern end of Lake Nicaragua with the Atlantic, while the distance from the lakes to the Pacific is at one place only slightly more than a dozen miles. The river and the lakes and the break in the Cordillera in which the lakes lie—Lake Nicaragua is only 110 feet above the Atlantic, and there are outlets through the hills between it and the Pacific which are only slightly higher than the lake itself—together make up the unique geographic fact which has drawn the eyes of canal-builders and canal-dreamers to Nicaragua ever since the possibilities of an interoceanic canal were understood.

We passed Chinandega, half burnt to the ground

during the recent fighting; solid, old-fashioned Leon, where the Liberals come from; and through the rich flat plain of Leon, which ought to be one vast garden but, also thanks to the revolution, was almost empty and unploughed; and then along the shores of the lake, with Momotombo smoking sleepily across the pale, yellowish water.

Huge, paunchy-jowled lizards waited until the train was alongside before scuttling to the other side of tree-trunks or off the fences. The air grew dryer and hotter and clouds of dust pelted the shutters or came through the open windows. A lady across the way was reading a movie magazine in Spanish, while her husband gravely pored over "Las Ultimas Episodios de Nick Carter." Above, among the advertisements along the eaves, was a particularly horrible one about an "*Elixir Sedative, Bromurado y con Cloral,*" for "insomnia, delirium tremens, neuralgia, hysterical attacks, and the blue devils (*diabolos azules*)." At last, after climbing into a brief belt of cooler air and a glimpse of a huge crater lake, roundabout the shores of which, possibly a thousand feet or so directly below, all the laundresses of the capital seemed to be busy with their washing, the train hurried down-hill into the oven-like heat, the dust, bad pavements, emaciated cab-horses, and general dreariness of Managua.

Certainly, as capitals go, it is one of the worst. Made the capital in 1845, by a Conservative army which had sacked the former capital, Leon, and butchered a large part of its Liberal inhabitants, it lies stewing here in the sun, midway between the two rival cities, without the comparative solidity and urbanity of either. Some day, perhaps, when the transcontinental railroad is built

ONE OF THE CRATER LAKES NEAR MANAGUA, THE NICARAGUAN CAPITAL.

A CORNER OF THE PLAZA IN LEON, HEADQUARTERS OF THE NICARAGUAN LIBERALS.

across Nicaragua and a spur runs up to Matagalpa and the high coffee country, they will move the capital up there, nearer the centre of the country and into a climate in which foreigners will not need to worry about the weather.

But, even with its discomforts, one could scarcely enter Managua at such a moment as we did, with American marines in control, an agent of our President about to stop by his simple fiat a long-drawn-out civil war, and all the Latin newspapers from the Paris *Temps* to the Buenos Aires *Nación* howling about American imperialism, without being struck more forcibly than ever with the curious short-sightedness of the occasional young "career diplomat" who fancies that the Caribbean posts are somehow beneath his talents, and that Managua, in particular, is a cruel and unusual punishment. I had met one such only a few weeks before, who, at the mere mention of the Nicaraguan capital, had thrown up his hands and declared that "no power on earth could ever take him back there!"

Just how much chance does the average third or fourth secretary in one of the European capitals—where, to be sure, the theatres and country clubs are attractive, the wines excellent, and servants expert and unobtrusive—have to influence the policies of the country to which he is accredited? Just about as much as the average foreign branch bank or shipping-clerk. Indeed, the services of the ambassador himself, in the older capitals, may often be those of mere observation rather than of concretely directing policies already determined by traditional needs and relationships.

In the nearer republics of Spanish America, on the other hand, both the rôle played by the American rep-

resentative and the chance the younger men have to do something real are quite different. A capable, serious young secretary may hope, after a brief experience, to be put in charge of the legation itself. With local government more or less a family affair, he can go directly to the president and get things done which, in Europe, might take months of negotiation.

Economic penetration by industrialized America of these adjacent agricultural neighborhoods is inevitable. Are the "invaders" going to take advantage of local weaknesses to encourage revolutions or otherwise behave in a manner that would not be tolerated at home? Is the local government going to fulfil its contracts and give foreigners a square deal? If the professional diplomat is not merely a more or less decorative anachronism to-day, his chance for concrete helpfulness here is obvious enough.

With the political influence of the United States in the Caribbean as inevitable as are the friction and misunderstanding arising from differences in temperament and tradition, there is, again, an opportunity for the exercise of tact and sympathetic understanding—for genuine diplomacy, in short—that need scarcely be pointed out. Hot and dusty Managua is, certainly; there is "nothing" to see or to do—nothing, that is, except things which, if they aren't done very tactfully, are going to be front-page news and stuff for criticism in every paper in Spanish America, let alone the rest of the world. It is quite big enough a post to be taken seriously, even by the most gilded of our young Talleyrands, and even though at some official function the local caterers may commit the incredible crime of serving red and white wine in the same glass.

III

The long experience Nicaragua has had, not only with its own interminable squabbles but with more or less forcible American intervention, had made the local point of view more realistic than that often found outside the country; and here in the capital thinking people seemed less preoccupied with the act of intervention than with the fact that the United States, if it intended to use force, had not done so long before.

There was no question that Solorzano and Sacasa had been legally elected president and vice-president; no question that Emiliano Chamorro had overthrown them by a lawless coup d'état. Nobody, except his own supporters perhaps, had approved of Chamorro's act. The United States had refused to recognize him, its chargé d'affaires had made no secret of the fact that sooner or later Chamorro must go, as go he eventually did. Why, one was asked, such events always casting their shadows before them, was Chamorro ever permitted to make his coup d'état, and, in effect, to drive Solorzano and Sacasa out of the country? Why, the coup d'état being a fact, were not Solerzano and Sacasa put back in their rightful places? Why was Señor Sacasa, an amiable gentleman, educated in the United States, and all but as friendly to American influence in Nicaragua as the newly elected president, Don Adolpho Diaz himself, allowed to cool his heels ignominiously in Washington and elsewhere until he finally drifted into the welcoming arms of Mexico? And why was the whole affair muddled along, with nonsensical and disingenuous talk about sending warships to Nicaragua be-

cause of the mouthings of this or that politician in Leningrad or Moscow, until it became at the last, after tragic destruction of life and property, largely a question of prestige between Mexico and the United States?

Whatever legalistic answers might be made to such queries, they were, at any rate, the questions actually asked on the spot by practical men, both natives and foreigners. Their quarrel was not so much with American policy as with the lack of it—not so much with the use of force as such as with the fact that a force so overwhelming that, as one man remarked to me, "any Managua cab-driver, armed with Mr. Stimson's ultimatum, could have driven out and stopped the war," was not used until Nicaragua was again devastated by civil war and we had been forced to come to the rescue of a gentleman who, however unjustly, was called a traitor to his country by the rest of Central America, and both in and out of Nicaragua frequently spoken of as a sort of American puppet and State Department pet.

In any case, the war was over, for the present at least. American marines policed the country, except in its remoter mountains and jungles, and would continue to do so until the "free and fair election" guaranteed by the President of the United States had been held. Already, the weary government troops were pouring into Managua, to turn in their arms at the cuartel and get their promised $10. Their women, barefoot, often with a baby in a shawl across their backs, tramped with them through the hot, ill-paved streets.

They looked very bored, these women, as if the whole performance were some sort of masculine sport which had little to do with the serious business of living, and very capable and able to take care of themselves. Most

of them, one supposed, had gone to the war as Central American peasant women often go with their men for the coffee-picking, a woman to make *tortillas* and to cook beans for so many men. Many an ancient rifle, doubtless, which had seen little or no fighting in the latest row, was exchanged for the welcome $10—which a foreign loan would pay for some time—but some of the Lewis machine-guns turned in by the government troops were superior to the Brownings with which our own marines were armed.

The entry into the capital of the revolutionary, or Liberal, leader, General Moncada, was quite in that "classic" Central American manner in which opera bouffe so often dresses the underlying tragedy. It came on a Sunday afternoon, so that everybody was free, and followed, quaintly enough, a formal little function at the American Legation at which a delegation of Conservatives from Grenada presented to the representative of the American President the honorary degree of doctor of laws. The Grenadiños spoke and handed Colonel Stimson a roll of parchment, and the latter, dignified, correct, and urbane, thanked the delegation, both as a lawyer and an American, and there were champagne and cigars.

The former secretary of war and future governor-general of the Philippines does not possess that flexibility of temperament which yields to or is much touched by an exotic scene. One suspected that he might live in Nicaragua for a lifetime and still continue to pronounce the name of the country, as he did that morning, "Nica-ra-gew-a," in a clear voice and with a clear conscience, and the air of one saying that if the Nicaraguans themselves chose a different pronunciation, a high-minded

and altruistic American would hold them none the worse for that.

And, of course, one might observe in passing, it is precisely the lack of a certain flexibility, the ability to function in a vacuum, so to speak, and to pursue some logically arrived at policy, undisturbed by outward atmosphere and events, which is often—as the English have revealed—one of the most useful traits in a colonial administrator.

His definite and authoritative stand was undoubtedly refreshing to the Nicaraguans. Instead of being left to the doubtful mercies of some tactless legation secretary, who might or might not be backed up by Washington, or bewildered by State Department ineptitudes which puzzled even Americans themselves, the Nicaraguan politicians found themselves able to talk face to face with an American of first-rate ability who was, for the moment, the spokesman of the American President himself.

After luncheon the peacemaker, accompanied by Minister Eberhardt and Admiral Latimer, and various informal observers from the American colony, all drove out to Tipitapa, about an hour's motor ride away, to confer with General Moncada. For the whole distance, most of it a pleasant drive under arching shade, we passed disarmed Liberals coming in. Whatever they may have started with on their long, hard fight cross-country from the east coast, nearly all of them had horses now. Red scarfs were tied round their hats, round their necks, or wherever a convenient place could be found. They seemed well-fed, in great spirits, and as they jogged cheerfully forward toward the capital they had been trying to capture and the farms they had left

untilled for many months, they kept splitting the air with pleasantly blood-curdling howls and war-whoops and yells of "*Viva Moncada! . . . Viva la revolución! . . . Viva la partida Libera-a-al! . . .*"

Being revolutionists, their morale had doubtless all along been better than that of the government troops, for the latter, poor devils, have only to defend the status quo, in the fruits of which they share little enough, goodness knows, while the revolutionists always hope to win something or other, even if only loot. They had fought a brave fight, clear across the jungles and mountains of a difficult country and up to the gates of the capital, and now, thanks to the obliging Americans, had been saved the necessity of living up to any more heroics and given the chance to get home and do their ploughing in time for the growing season's rains. But, granting all this, one couldn't drive past those miles of flashing eyes and white teeth in brown faces, all those rakish bandanna neckerchiefs and flaming slouch hats, all the howls given and flung back—couldn't watch, in short, that whole afternoon's wild and ingenuous spectacle—without the feeling that revolution and civil war, with all their stupid and unnecessary horrors, were nevertheless an escape from monotony and by way of being the great Nicaraguan national sport.

We passed some neat, open khaki tents; a marine in a sleeveless undershirt reading *The Saturday Evening Post*; and presently came to the village of Tipitapa and the Liberal general and his staff waiting under a spreading tree. One of them was a Mexican daredevil, a handsome, panther-like chap, with a red bandanna knotted loosely above a half-open shirt, and a gun hanging handy. All the subordinate "generals" were looped

with belts of cartridges. Moncada himself was a smooth-faced, bronzed, middle-aged man, who looked a little preoccupied and tired but hard and capable. He was of unmixed white blood, with blue eyes, and suggested a little some retired Middle-Western farmer. He had poise and dignity, spoke a slow but accurate English, and seemed a man to reckon with.

Jose María Moncada first came to the front during the revolution which deposed Zelaya in 1910. Although the forces in that revolution were mostly Conservative, there were also a good many Liberals who had fallen out with Zelaya for one reason or another. The president who succeeded Zelaya, Juan J. Estrada, was a Liberal, who had been Zelaya's governor on the east coast, and Moncada became minister of *gobernacion* in Estrada's cabinet. When Estrada was forced out of office by the more or less open opposition of his minister of war, Luis Mena, and his foreign minister, Emiliano Chamorro, both of them Conservatives, Moncada resigned also, and Adolpho Diaz, the vice-president, the same Don Adolpho whom the American Government was now supporting with its armed forces, became president. So that the rivalry between Diaz and Moncada was no new thing. With Señor Sacasa himself almost forgotten now, in his isolation on the east coast, and quite blanketed as a popular hero by the exploits in the field of his general-in-chief, Moncada became a more or less logical candidate for the election which the Americans had promised to supervise.

Supported by Admiral Latimer, Colonel Stimson addressed the Liberal leader, said that he had come out to see him because he admired and respected him, and that the President of the United States felt that guar-

anteeing the Nicaraguans a free and fair election was a sacred duty owed to the men who had died bravely on the field of battle. General Moncada replied appropriately, and swinging himself on the running-board of one of the automobiles he harangued his followers briefly in Spanish and paid tribute to the greatness and good intentions of the United States.

Would not General Moncada like to ride into Managua in Colonel Stimson's car? The general demurred, on the ground that in the circumstances the enthusiasm of his followers might lead to indiscretions. On the other hand, suggested Admiral Latimer, inasmuch as the Liberal troops were passing through the capital on their way home, might not his presence there insure that they passed through quickly and quietly? Possibly there was something in that, the general admitted. The daughter of one of the American civilians living in Managua thereupon came forward with a birthday-book, asking for the general's signature and the date of his birthday. Really, he couldn't remember, he said, but added gallantly that doubtless it was on the day the Americans came.

Then he climbed into the official American car, his staff hurried into others, and there began a curious and almost triumphal procession back to the capital. The reception must have been impromptu, for the invitation to accompany the Americans had apparently been an afterthought, but somebody must have telephoned ahead, and not only the streets of the capital but most of the country road between Tipitapa and Managua were lined with cheering people and ablaze with the Liberal colors.

Men and boys poured over our car and jammed the

running-board. There was a continuous hullabaloo for Moncada and the *partida Liberal*. Once a woman, who could scarcely be pushed out, thrust her head inside our automobile, howling madly "*Viva la revolución! Viva la revolución!*" meanwhile pounding tires, running-board, or whatever she could hit with a big club for all she was worth. That the war had been stopped before anybody won and that the Liberal leader was riding in the automobile of the foreign invaders who had insisted that his Conservative enemy continue as president didn't seem to bother anybody in the least.

Drowsy, dusty Managua, by the time we got there, was transformed. It not only seemed to have three or four times as many inhabitants as usual—of course it takes some excitement like this to get the women out from the inner patios into the street—but the whole populace had the air of being made up of healthier, brighter, more go-ahead sort of people. Red flags, banners, streamers of red cloth and red tissue-paper suddenly bloomed all over the place.

The week that followed was similarly odd. Moncada took a room at the Hotel Luponé and promptly the place began to resemble an American political party headquarters during a campaign. All day long, either in the general's room or round one of the tables near the bar, or under the canopy adjoining it, before the admiring gaze of the populace, there were conferences between the general and his henchmen. Each of his generals was interviewed by the local reporters and written up at length and resoundingly. All day long, except when the fatherly American marine who acted as sentry and policeman at Luponé's entrance made them move on, men and boys hung three deep over the iron fence

between the hotel yard and the street. And, although both armies had been disarmed, the Moncada staff were permitted for several days to flaunt their pistols, cartridge-belts, and red bandannas to their heart's content. In short, so far as the Liberal hero and Managua went, the American intervention could scarcely have worn a softer velvet glove.

IV

The position of the Conservative president, meanwhile, in a capital controlled by Americans and blazing with the colors of the rival party which had nearly defeated him, lambasted by all the press of Spanish America as a traitor who had "sold" his country to the gringos, and not very popular even with his own crowd, was not enviable. Don Adolpho is a sleek, suave little man—he might, so far as appearances go, be a small-town American banker—with a slightly Byzantine manner, which may veil more shrewdness and understanding of his country's conditions than at first appears. He worked for an American corporation before going into politics, speaks English easily, understands American ways, and is generally described by foreigners who have had dealings with him as a "sensible fellow—the sort of man you can work with."

One seemed to get an echo of this even in a brief chat with the president. Land? Oh, there's plenty of land! No land problem in Nicaragua; you can always buy land if you want it. Schools? Oh, yes, plenty of schools! Not all there should be, of course, especially with the country upset like this, but plenty of schools, oh, yes! And now we shall have peace and prosperity, let us hope. What we need most is capital, transportation,

more railroads. Oh, yes, and automobiles, too; automobiles are a great help! Americans? Oh, no, no danger of that—we welcome American influence and help. Peace, capital, transportation, that's it . . . thank you very much . . . if there's anything I can do for you . . . and I hope you will call again. . . .

Through Luponé's, where nearly all strangers come if you wait long enough, there passed in those curious days a Nicaraguan old-timer, an American coffee-planter and his wife down from the Matagalpa country —tropical pioneers who had come to Nicaragua with little, made a success of it, lived through the ups and downs of thirty years or so of Nicaraguan politics, and spoke of the fighting bands, red or blue, which now and then trampled across their finca, simply as "scamps."

"Nicaraguans? Ain't no such animal! They're all just 'Liberals' or 'Conservatives.' We've had 'em both, up at our place, plenty of times and sometimes both at the same time. Why, once this winter, mother baked over a hundred biscuits and fed 'em all to them to keep 'em in good humor! Well, they didn't take anything from us, but they run off with all but one of our neighbor's mules. Just tell those fellows that somebody is a 'Liberal' or a 'Conservative,' and if he isn't their own crowd, they'll hurry down there and finish off his place and kill all his stock! Regular scamps! . . . Wonderful the way their women follow them. On foot, over the mountains, and carrying their babies and pots and pans . . . Yes, we've been out here a long while. You see, we were just married and I came out from Boston to Minneapolis to make our fortune. Then I got sciatica, and went south to a warm climate—New Orleans first, then Bluefields, finally up to Matagalpa. 'Denounced' some land there,

set out a lot of coffee-trees and had a crop in five years. Now we spend six months there, and six in the States. Our boy's gone into coffee, too. He's done a lot of the work himself. One of the señoritas up there wouldn't speak to him because he worked with his hands and went round without a coat on. But he said she didn't have anything in her upper story anyway. He tried working in the States, but came back after a while. Said he 'couldn't be any man's slave'! Well, he got 1,300 bags off his place last year. What could he have got as good as that back home? . . . Yes, it's nice climate up round Matagalpa. We sleep under two blankets every night. . . ."

V

The reception to General Moncada reminded me a little of the fiesta which the Nicaraguan capital was in the midst of celebrating when I arrived there in 1913, although that was for a local saint, Santo Domingo de Guzman, instead of for a warrior. Troops of exhilarated young men dashed through the town then on scrubby little horses, while bombs burst far overhead in the hot sunshine. Outside the town was a great uproar —they were bringing the image of the sainted mariner from the little country church where he spends most of his time to his own particular church in the capital.

This happens once a year. The devout crowd into his church and pray there, the tired peasant women and children sleeping nights on the stone church floor, and everybody who has made a promise earlier in the year must keep it. After a fortnight the image is taken back to the country again. The saint understands very well how long he should stay in town, and if left so much as

a day overtime goes back by himself. Several men in the crowd and the waiter in my hotel assured me of this—you might try to keep him in Managua, but you would wake up to-morrow and find that he had gone back to his niche in the country by himself.

In a boat set on a wagon—for Santiago was a sailor—the image rocked and jolted in its glass case, while a more or less inebriated band played, and the populace kept up a terrifying uproar with their sky-rocket bombs. These *cohuetes* are home-made sky-rockets, of which men held an armful, lighting them one by one with their cigarettes and holding them in their bare fingers until they whizzed upward. At the end of their flight they went off with a tremendous bang, and whether they whizzed up, down, or into the crowd nobody seemed to care in the least. Roistering young farmers galloped recklessly back and forth, swinging their foaming, bridlewise little ponies this way and that on their heavy Spanish bits, and now and then pulling them up short beside the wagon while they whipped off their sombreros and gave a viva for the saint. Then, while the devout prayed in the church before the image, there was bull-baiting and rough-riding, including riding of the bulls themselves, in a corral alongside the church. And, whether or not Santiago took a personal interest in the protection of his worshippers, the day ended with nobody hurt.

Nowadays, the annual fiesta is not quite so ingenuously celebrated as it was then, and those who think themselves a bit above such demonstrations drive round town in their motor-cars, shooting off firecrackers.

President Diaz, the same Don Adolpho, was then, as now, under protection of an American "Legation

Guard." Our forces had not only landed in Nicaragua but had had several stiff fights, including the storming of the supposedly impregnable hill of Coyotepe. The American flag was flying over the Campo del Marte, marine officers and their wives now and then turkey-trotted and played bridge in the late President Zelaya's palace, and dithyrambic editors and their even more incandescent contributors were showering on the situation such oratory as the censorship permitted.

One read then of the grief Nicaraguans felt to see "flaming on the blue crests of our mountains and over our streets the starry banner which has for its flagstaff the big stick," that "silence is not peace, but a truce. If the hoarse voice of the cannon roaring 'Liberty!' no longer breaks the silence of our forests, it is not because we accept our conquerors or are lulled to sleep by our chains."

In the introduction to a book of poems given me by its author, Señor Santiago Arguello, a cultured and amiable gentleman who lived with his sisters in a house with a big, cool patio in Leon and had a coffee finca in the near-by mountains, one read of "this bestial hour, noisy with the metallic neighing of force" and that "the blond pigs of Pennsylvania advance on our gardens of beauty. The air is filled with their grunting, and the Latin soul trembles before the pawing of Nietzsche's blond beast."

El Metropolitano, after chiding one of its more delirious contributors for fancying that Nicaragua could hope to fight the "Yankee filibusters," fell back for an instant on the dream of Spanish-American union:

> Hundreds of journalists in the Antilles, Mexico, Central and South America are at work, and all this human energy,

inflamed by a holy idea, can bring about a physical union of Latin America, a union which will multiply our forces so that, bound together in one titanic impulse, we can break the chains which would fasten to the chariot of the North the virgin daughters of Cristobal Colon. . . .

A little space of white paper and the editor reverted to the educated Central American's characteristic pessimism:

What are we saying? United Latin America? There is no remedy! We ourselves are dreaming, falling into the vicious circle, we too are illusionists proclaiming impossible utopias.

How can Latin America unite when there is division and dissimulation in every household, no harmony even between different quarters of the same town? When in every city, people dispute and vociferate over trivial and puerile things and insult each other with extravagant criticism? When the whole continent is separated by abysses and sick with a criminal indifference? In the presence of this continental pandemonium, we might well ask whether this discordant world of ours was made by God or the Devil . . .

But even those little newspapers of 1913 weren't all rhetoric, and as one turns over their yellowing pages—a pile I picked up then have been gathering dust on a shelf ever since—there pops out every now and then some little flash of reality.

Here, for instance, is a citizen of Managua writing to his paper that "at four o'clock on the afternoon of July 24, 1913, in the Campo del Marte, I tried to read a summons to El Capitan, W. H. Green, when the latter threw the paper on the ground and told me 'Gore Hel!'" The spelling is shaky, as the spelling of the gringo's vernacular often is in Spanish-American papers, but the essentials seem to be there.

And advertisers then had the habit, which they have

not quite lost, of catching their readers with make-believe news-heads. Thus, under "Extra! Complete Change of Ministry!" we find a wagon and six horses for sale; under "Another Crime," notice that "eighty manzanas of good pasture-land may be had on the shores of Lake Nicaragua." Under "Mr. Wilson's Advice"—"Mr. Wilson cables that the best way to avoid war in Nicaragua is for all—Conservatives and Liberals —to sleep well. For this try the magnificent wire mattresses made by Fernando Ampre. No more leather beds." The old-fashioned bed in Nicaragua, it might be explained, was made by stretching a hide over a wooden frame, and in the hot country towns, where you want as little over and under you as possible, it was not half bad.

VI

This is primarily a narrative of things seen, and I should prefer to keep it such, but, in view of the unusual relations between the United States and Nicaragua, it might be as well to insert here a sort of time-table of events, before resuming an individual traveller's personal story.

The Washington Conference of 1907 between the Central American republics resulted in a treaty of peace and amity between them and the establishment of a Central American Court of Justice, which was to "decide every difference or difficulty that may arise amongst them." After President Zelaya of Nicaragua had repeatedly broken the terms of the treaty, stirred up trouble in all five of the republics, and been succeeded, after a successful revolution, by President Estrada, the United States, which had already paved the way by the so-

called Dawson Agreements, in 1910, sent a financial expert to Nicaragua, and a loan convention, known as the Knox-Castrillo treaty, secured by the Nicaraguan customs, was ratified by Nicaragua in 1911. It was three times presented in the United States Senate but never passed.

Brown Brothers and J. and W. Seligman Company of New York, who were prepared to loan Nicaragua $15,000,000 if the treaty had passed, meanwhile made a temporary loan of $1,500,000, also secured by customs receipts, and the bankers nominated an American, Colonel Clifford D. Ham, formerly in the Philippines Customs Service, as collector-general of customs. Nicaragua also arranged with the United States for a mixed-claims commission to settle all claims against the republic.

The original loan proving inadequate, the bankers later made several more small loans, as a result of which they secured control of 51 per cent of the stock in the Nicaraguan railroad. They also made an agreement with the foreign bondholders to reduce the interest on the so-called Ethelburga loan—a relic of the Zelaya regime—provided interest and amortization charges were made a first lien on the customs. A financial scheme was also put through, which included a government budget for ordinary expenses, and a special fund for extraordinary government expenses which was later put under the control of a so-called high commission of three, two of whom were to be Americans, and for a national bank, 51 per cent of the stock of which was to be controlled by the American bankers.

Brown Brothers withdrew from Nicaragua in 1919, but the Seligman Company continued as agents for the

European holders of the 1909 bonds. The controlling stock in the railroad was resold to the government in 1920, J. G. White and Company, of New York, being retained, however, to manage the road, and the bank also was sold back to Nicaragua in 1925, although it continued to be directed by representatives of the Guarantee Trust Company of New York.

When the Knox-Castrillo treaty failed to pass the United States Senate, another treaty, initiated by Secretary Knox and President Adolpho Diaz but finally known as the Bryan-Chamorro treaty when, after various changes, it was finally ratified in 1916, was put through, granting to the United States the exclusive rights in any future interoceanic canal built across Nicaragua. The clause giving the United States the right to intervene in Nicaraguan affairs, "when necessary to preserve her independence or to protect life and property in her domain," suggested, it is said, by President Diaz, was not passed by our Senate, but the treaty provided that the United States should pay Nicaragua $3,000,000 for the canal privilege.

This latter clause, together with a clause leasing to the United States Great Corn and Little Corn Islands in the Caribbean, and giving the United States the right to establish a naval base in the Bay of Fonseca, which washes the coasts of Honduras and Salvador as well as Nicaragua, brought forth vigorous protests from both Salvador and Costa Rica. Costa Rica based its case on a treaty of 1858 with Nicaragua giving it perpetual rights of free navigation on the lower San Juan River, while Salvador held that "the establishment by a powerful state of a naval base in the immediate vicinity of the Republic of El Salvador would

constitute a serious menace to the freedom of life and the autonomy of that republic."

Both protests were taken to the Central American Court of Justice, which handed down decisions in 1916 and 1917 in favor of both protestants. The action of the court was disregarded by both the United States and Nicaragua, and as a result the court presently ceased to function. The "selling" of the canal rights for what was generally felt in Central America to be a paltry sum (the Nicaraguan Liberals argued somewhat humorously that Japan and Germany might well have been willing to bid more!) and the granting of the naval bases in defiance of the court and of Central American public opinion (it is only fair to recall that these events took place in the thick of the World War, when national high-handedness was the fashion) gave much support, naturally, to criticism of the United States and to the charges that the Nicaraguan Government was merely its puppet.

In 1923 there was another conference of the Central American states in Washington, at which the republics agreed not to recognize any government which came into power through a coup d'état. It was after this conference, and after a new election law had been drawn up for Nicaragua by an American, H. W. Dodd, that Solorzano and Sacasa were elected in 1924. Although not a party to the treaty, the United States agreed to follow the treaty in recognizing Central American governments, and it was while so acting that it refused recognition to Emiliano Chamorro when he overthrew the elected government and made himself president in 1926.

There are chances enough for criticism in the proces-

sion of happenings thus briefly outlined without indulging in any of the loose talk occasionally heard in our own Congress and newspapers about "exploiting the Nicaraguans for the benefit of American capitalists" and holding some vague "Wall Street" to blame for Nicaragua's ills. None of the familiar Central American stencils is more outworn and meaningless than this. Bankers loaning money to a country like Nicaragua, for the diseases of which they, after all, are not to blame, naturally take such measures as they can to protect themselves. The whole amounts of money involved, as "Wall Street" understands money, are so trifling that, in view of the criticism they have raised, the several small loans to Nicaragua might well be regarded as more bother than they were worth. I have myself made no exhaustive study of the ups and downs of these loans, although I have read most that has been written on the subject and talked with several of the principals concerned; and Doctor Dana G. Munro, of our foreign service, who has criticised some of our official acts in Central America, seems to be talking common sense when he hesitates to accept the notion that "two great financial institutions of the standing of Brown Brothers and Seligman Company would compromise their reputation and devote their time and energy in schemes for defrauding Nicaragua of a few thousands a year."

Order and prosperity in Nicaragua, and a regime as stable and independent as that of Costa Rica would be good for everybody concerned, including American exporters and the comparatively few American planters and business men who have invested money and time in Nicaragua. The faults in our official treatment of

Nicaragua as elsewhere generally in the Caribbean, have been not so much those of policy as of lack of policy; not those of malice or unfriendliness but of ignorance and ineptitude.

It is part of our political system that we have all kinds of secretaries of state, not all equally able, and, although we have colonies, dependencies, and spheres of influence, we lack any suitable colonial office. It cannot be said that our Caribbean policy, or lack of policy, is partisan, for, while much of the criticism of our official acts has come from Democratic sources, during no period have so many high-handed acts in the Caribbean region been done as during the regime of President Wilson. There are all sorts of men in the foreign service, some serious, tactful, and gifted with understanding, some not; and it has again been an example of our lack of policy that it is precisely these Caribbean posts—in which diplomacy can really accomplish something and in which we have suspicion and sensitiveness to overcome—that have been left often to political lame ducks or to boys whose only thought was how soon they might get away from them. Doubtless our State Department is undermanned, and has not kept pace in size and weight with the increasing importance of our foreign relations. What is needed is not so much a change of policy toward the Caribbean countries as a clearer definition of it; a better understanding of their conditions and peculiar prejudices, and some suitable organization for carrying on our relations with them with a continuity of intelligence.

Inextricably tangled up with any policy as such, in "backward" tropical countries like some of those of the Caribbean, are the weaknesses in the links of the human

chain necessary to put it into effect. The policy itself may be well enough, the men at the top be well-meaning and able, and the whole machine put out of order because some individual rough-neck out at the end of the line in the jungle takes a few drinks too many or happens to suffer from dementia præcox.

The difficulty of fitting an inflexible military hierarchy of any sort to the mixed-up, every-day human affairs of any alien people need not be pointed out. Colonel Stimson, let us say, is a high-minded and statesmanlike gentleman. He genuinely wishes to help the Nicaraguans. As long as he stands there, the visible symbol of the power and good intentions of the United States, one's doubts are stilled, and the Nicaraguans feel that they are really face to face with the United States, with that traditional America which once was glad enough to welcome the new Spanish-American republics into a sisterhood of New World sovereign nations.

But when Colonel Stimson, for example, sails away there are left, scattered all over a more or less trackless tropical country, a variety of other symbols—two-fisted young leather-necks, hot, lonely, more or less uncomfortable, far from their kind, knowing nothing of the people they are expected to keep in order or of the delicate mission on which their country has embarked, beyond the fact that they are to obey the orders that descend from the link in the chain higher up. Somebody does something that cuts across these orders, becomes thereby a "bandit," and the good old show begins.

VII

I was struck with these inevitable embarrassments, common to all "occupations" and "interventions," immediately on leaving Managua for Leon. I have spoken of the velvet glove which our occupation wore during Colonel Stimson's presence in the capital. It seemed to extend right down the line to the fatherly and philosophical marine who used to act as sentry in front of Luponé's Hotel.

In Leon one felt at once a different atmosphere. The townspeople were getting off the sidewalk and giving a wide berth to the sentries on patrol in front of the public building the marines used as a barracks. At the band concert in the central plaza that night marines with fixed bayonets stalked at frequent intervals through the promenade. Once or twice civilian prisoners were marched down the middle of the street, a marine with lowered bayonet close behind, a more or less worried pack of friends and relatives following at a discreet distance. Next to my room in the hotel was the headquarters of a naval officer and I dropped in to pass the time of day. He was a good-natured, hearty, loud-voiced sea-dog who, without asking whether or not I had any acquaintance with Spanish-Americans, promptly and with complete dogmatism began to lay down the law about them.

They were all, it seemed, liars and crooks. You couldn't trust one of their politicians round the block, all the way from the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego. Unless, possibly, President Leguia of Peru. Yes, Leguia, wasn't a bad fellow. Anyhow, he knew 'em root and branch, because he'd been stationed among

'em—"right in the government"—and seen things from the inside. But they were easy enough to handle, if you only knew how. No two of 'em could ever agree on anything, so all you had to do was to get all parties together, give each man a suggestion to play with, and presently you had the whole gang fighting amongst each other. Then you stepped in as peacemaker, told 'em all where they got off, and settled things as you wished!

Simple as it all appeared to him, one couldn't escape the notion that there were depths he hadn't completely fathomed, nor look forward to an indefinite American military occupation, with his breezily carefree judgments and personal whims percolating down through the Leon neighborhood, with unmixed confidence and relief.

A naval officer may be a fine fellow personally, useful and efficient aboard ship, a gallant officer and gentleman; but how much is there in his training, experience, and group psychology which fits him for the subtle and complex tasks that face the administrator of an "occupied" alien people? Just how content would the Americans of the very city or county he hails from at home remain, for instance, were they suddenly put under martial law and forced to put the running of their municipal affairs in the hands of officers despatched from the nearest American cruiser?

Did any "occupied" people, whether Haitians, Nicaraguans, or Belgians, ever accept the logic of intervention as it necessarily appears to the interveners? Here was a proclamation posted on the sidewalks of Leon warning the populace that "two men of the American command had lost their lives as a result of people

carrying arms, and that hereafter any one found with arms in his possession would be treated as the American authorities saw fit." Obvious enough from the standpoint of the latter, who cannot run the risk of being potted from ambush, or of having stray bands of armed men break into shops and start looting. Less obvious to the Nicaraguans themselves, who are as accustomed to carrying a "gun" in their somewhat unhousebroken country as North Americans are to carrying fountain pens, and who had lost, in the same scuffle to which the proclamation referred, not 2, but 37 men.

Sandino was a chieftain who refused to abide by the Stimson-Moncada agreement, and instead took to the bush. In one of the first brushes he had with an American outpost American flyers came with great dash and bravery to their comrades' rescue. They were cited for their work, and quite properly, and unquestionably Sandino was an embarrassing customer who, once the marines took charge of the task of keeping order, had to be put down; but the Nicaraguans, who had no planes and no anti-aircraft guns, were said to have lost 300 men in the same engagement in which the marine losses were 1, and, human nature being what it is, it will probably always be impossible to convince the friends and relatives of those representing the wrong end of such scores that their people are anything but heroes and ours anything but oppressors. All this is but another chapter in an old and familiar story—the same thing happened in Haiti on a bigger and more tragic scale, and sooner or later in any such intervention can scarcely be escaped; but it seems to be forgotten very easily every time the old story is begun again, with

peace signed and delivered by some leader, like Moncada, who for one reason or another is prepared to make it; hands are clasped, toasts drunk, and all is over but the shouting! . . .

VIII

Liberal Leon, which used to be the capital of the province of Nicaragua in colonial times and is still the largest town in Nicaragua, is known for its doctors and lawyers and its interest in its schools and university and intellectual affairs in general, as contrasted with Conservative Grenada and its comparatively wealthy merchants and *finqueros*. It is a low-roofed, sprawling old town of solid houses built round comfortable inner patios, and not at all worried by the grass that not infrequently sprouts between the cobbles of its quiet streets. Severe and fort-like outside, though often tinted a cheery indigo, salmon, lemon, or pale blue, the houses are vast within, and the traveller, used to the absurdity of New York flats, is constantly impressed by glimpses, through barred windows or wide-open doors, of long, wide *corridores* paved with shining colored tiles, such as at home would be found only in art museums or non-utilitarian public buildings.

It was in one of these wide-roofed corridors, flanking a pleasant patio, that I gossiped for a time with the editor of one of the local papers, who wrote, corrected proofs, and received subscriptions at one end of the court while his wife and daughter sewed and went about other household business at the other. He was anti-American to the extent that he blandly assured me that one of our former ministers had been bought for so-and-so much by the villainous *Conservadores* (as

Nicaraguan Liberals often will, without the slightest concrete evidence), but at the same time quite as cheerfully remarked that, if the Americans hadn't intervened in the Sacasa revolution, it might well have killed off half the male population of Nicaragua. And meanwhile he had his smiling daughter prepare for us a very refreshing *chicha de mamuey* and insisted that I lug off with me an enormous alligator-pear which must have weighed two pounds, I should say, was two inches deep at the ends, from outer skin to seed, and as rich and smooth as butter. (The things that often pass for alligator-pears in the North, it might be remarked, are enough to make a Nicaraguan monkey laugh.)

It was in another of these spacious old Leon houses, on that earlier visit, that I had met the Señor Arguello already referred to, a Nicaraguan literary man who had had a play, "Ocasu," put on in Leon and later in Spain, and had published several books of poems in Barcelona and Paris. In one of the volumes he presented me then was one of those characteristic introductions which Central Americans write in each other's books, quoting everybody from Homer down and placing the author close to the top of the list. This one, forty pages long, began in a staccato style, thus:

> We plant for eternity.
> We plant the tree of life.
> Life is the word.
> Of all humanity, the word is the eternal thing.
> Its sound passes, but . . .

This book of Santiago Arguello is not a revelation, it is a consecration. It does not appear to gain fame, but to affirm the Continental verdict, which already declares him one of the

From a photograph by Ewing Galloway.

CATTLE ON THE PARK-LIKE LEON PLAIN WHICH HAS BEEN FOUGHT OVER IN MANY NICARAGUAN REVOLUTIONS.

great poets who share between them the boundless realm of fame and glory.

The luminous and plastic lyricism of Arguello, full of grace and radiance, has all the secret of music. Let us draw nearer the enchantment of these roses of the spirit, flowering in the fields of meditation and silence.

In the convulsions of the present hour, in this bestial moment which we call the Rooseveltian hour, a book of beauty like this is a rose-bush flowering on a rubbish heap. The taciturnity and divine idealism of his songs fills with harmony a brutal instant, noisy with the metallic neighing of force.

This book, proving the mental superiority of our race, appears in the hour of our physical subjugation. Flower of idealism, will it be buried under the hurricane of materialism? No! There are still . . . etc., etc.

Señor Arguello himself spoke quite sensibly and objectively of his own people and ours, regretting that we seemed to know only each other's faults. I can see that cool drawing-room now, with the French blinds shutting out the afternoon sun, and his sisters peacefully sewing in the shade of the tiled inner court, and the Nicaraguan himself as he waved good-by to me next morning at a little railroad-station near Managua —the good-natured, hearty *hacendado* now, in riding-things, with a revolver in his belt, ready to take the mule which a respectful servant held near by and ride up into his coffee.

He was a Nicaraguan one would like to have seen more of, but when I tried to hunt him up again on this later visit it was said that he was not in Leon, having, like many other Nicaraguan Liberals, found it healthier of late to live abroad.

Leon's most distinguished son—one of the few, indeed, of the countless Spanish-American poets, who

have attained general recognition as having talents of the first order—was, of course, the late Ruben Dario, who died in 1916—the year in which the United States passed the treaty with Nicaragua which gave us the exclusive right to build an interoceanic canal across Nicaragua and a naval base on the Gulf of Fonseca.

Son, as the gossip goes, of a Leon father by one of his *mestiza* servants—a common enough origin in a neighborhood where the existence of several illegitimate families is almost an accepted idiosyncrasy of the more vigorous and roving males—he scarcely knew his parents, it is said, and later took the name of an ancestor, went abroad to Chile, the Argentine, Paris, and Spain, and won his general fame.

Dario wrote travel sketches, short stories, and verse in various veins. At his best he had depth and penetration, and music and wings. He could give the sonorous Spanish the simplicity of Wordsworthian English:

> *"Juventud, divino tésoro,*
> *ya te vas para no volver!*
> *Cuando quiero llorar, no lloro. . . .*
> *Y a veces lloro sin querer. . . ."*

(Youth, divine treasure, you go, never to return. When I want to weep, I cannot. And at times, I weep without wanting to. . . .)

One doesn't need to understand Spanish to catch the mounting, drum-beat rhythm of that chant to the Spanish conquerors—dedicated to King Oscar of Sweden when he visited Spain—in which Dario speaks of that "forest of lances which passed Pyrenees and Andes," and thanks the Swedish king for his "Long live Spain!" in the name of "Isabel who believed, and Columbus

who dreamed, of Velasquez who painted, and Cortes who conquered":

". . . por la armudura antigua y el yelmo de la gesta;
por las lanzas que fueron una vasta floresta
de gloria y que pasaron Pirineos y Andes;
por Lepanto y Otumba; por el Perú, por Flandes;
por Isabel que cree, por Cristóbal que sueña
y Velásquez que pinta y Cortés que domeña . . ."

Dario was a heavy æsthete in some of his phases, but he was not merely æsthetic and lyrical. He fancied himself a diplomat, was Nicaraguan consul once in Spain, and he could put into verse political satire a good deal more intelligent than that written in prose by most Spanish-American controversialists.

He was not always anti-American, but he did ask the sphinx in one of his poems if "all Latin America must eventually bow down to the proud barbarian. Shall all these millions of men speak English? Shall there be no more noble hidalgos and gallant gentlemen? Shall we be silent now, in order later to weep?"

"Seremos entregados a los bárbaros fieros?
Tantos millones de hombres hablaremos inglés?
Y no hay nobles hidalgos ni bravos cabelleros?
Callaremos ahora para llorar después? . . ."

Perhaps his best-known attack in this vein was his ode to Roosevelt:

"It needs the voice of the Bible and the verse of Walt Whitman," he said there, "to reach you, O mighty hunter! Primitive and modern, simple and complex, with something of Washington and a fourth part of Nimrod. You are the United States, the future

invader of that simpler America which has indigenous blood, still prays to Jesus Christ, and speaks Spanish. You are a superb and powerful example of your race. You are cultured and clever, you dispute Tolstoy. And dominating horses or assassinating tigers, you are an Alexander-Nabucodonosor (professor of energy, as the idiots of to-day are fond of saying). You fancy that life is a conflagration, that progress is an eruption, and that he who has the bullets holds the future. . . . No!——"

And then, after contrasting Latin America with the United States, and telling how a mighty tremor sweeps down the backbone of the Andes whenever the United States stirs, Dario drops a space and thumps out his final line:

"*Y, pues contáis con todo, falta una cosa: Dios!*"
(And yet, with all this, one thing fails you: God!)

IX

Grenada, off at the other end of the railway, on the shore of Lake Nicaragua, where the pirates used to come up from the Caribbean in the old days to cache their loot and heal their sores, is smaller than Leon, but it also has its solid and individual air, and is a decidedly pleasanter town than the capital.

About all I seemed to remember of it from my visit in 1913 was a tropical deluge that followed the blistering afternoon on which we arrived and turned streets into muddy rivers three feet deep, and then—after a clear sunset on warm, steaming earth—quick darkness, and the tremendous croaking, almost roaring, of armies of tree-toads or frogs. But it seemed char-

acteristic this time, after what one had heard about the wealthy old conservative merchant and land-owning families of Grenada, that our little "Pullman," on the ride between Managua and Grenada, should be just about taken over by a very prosperous-looking and rather *mondaine* party of Grenadiños, just off the San Francisco boat, and disengaging the air of those accustomed to de luxe staterooms, the best hotels, and, in general, to doing as they pleased.

They constantly slipped English words and phrases into their Spanish. There were several pretty ladies; two bald, heavy-jowled gentlemen reminiscent of Mark Hanna; and one very elegant young man, distressed by the heat, who, just as we were pulling into his native city and the welcome he knew was waiting there, borrowed a powder-puff and a make-up glass from one of the ladies and carefully dusted his face and neck.

It was as he was thus engaged that there came a sudden banging of fireworks, bombs, the toot of a band, and outside appeared an archway of flowers, bearing the words, in a characteristic mingling of English and Spanish: "*SALUD AL SUGAR KING.*"

It was the returning "sugar-king," Don Aldolpho Bernard, as it happened, to whom I had a letter of introduction, and, as I was to spend but the night in Grenada, I made bold to present the letter at once and to arrange to call at his house that same evening before dinner.

I arrived, rather inopportunely, to find the spacious *corridores* on three sides of the big inner patio already set for a huge dinner-party. It was evidently going to be an old-fashioned patriarchal Spanish-American

home-coming, and Don Adolpho was to be welcomed by all his kinsmen and friends.

Already callers were dropping in to embrace him, but he amiably left them to receive me in his formal *sala* and to bring with him a brisk young nephew who spoke English readily and had been to school in the States. The latter explained breezily that Leon had a lot of poets and orators—"but that doesn't get you anywhere, does it!"—and assured me that Grenada was "quite Americanized." As for American influence, there ought to be more of it in Nicaragua, especially, as the older gentleman observed, "since Europe can't bother with South America since the War."

Explaining that I had just come from Costa Rica, I spoke of the number of peasant proprietors there. "Oh, yes!" the younger man nodded briskly, somewhat misinterpreting my drift. "That's just like Leon. You see some dirty fellow over there and he has his little patch of land. It's very different over here. Everything's in fine big estates over here in Grenada." The sugar-king nodded gravely and remarked that undoubtedly Grenada was "much more civilized."

It would have been very interesting to stay and view that mighty collation, but I had already returned to my hotel and devoured one of its depressing table d'hôtes before the nephew reappeared with the news that Don Adolpho would be pleased to have me dine with them. A resourceful traveller would have accepted promptly—for one can't be too punctilious with only a day in a strange town—but this one must needs blurt out, "But we've just dined!" and so the young man courteously proffered a card to the club and thus ended the brief incursion into Grenadiño society.

The club was a high-ceilinged affair, more or less open to the plaza and offering passers-by the view of a sort of tropical adaptation of the grand staircase of the Paris Opera House. A row of cosmopolitan-looking young men in white sat in armchairs under the high arcade, smoking and idly watching several ragged little half-breed youngsters knock mangoes off the park trees. One could fancy some such cool, high-ceilinged club, and very much such young bloods—sons of the neighboring planters—in some Southern port, Mobile, possibly, in the old slave days.

Within, two clean-cut, smart young American marine officers were chatting over a table and something cool near the bar when an orderly hurried up with a message for one of them. It was pretty to watch the curt and shipshape style in which the boy saluted, delivered his message, and the two hurried away, the officer walking as fast as one could without running, the orderly trailing him about three paces behind as if the two were tied together, the whole trick, in that languid tropical night, suggesting discipline, alertness, vigilance, and a sensitive hand on the reins.

The hotel room—vast, high, and bare, opening within on the balcony running round the patio and without on the long balcony running the full length of the building—also suggested some old-fashioned Southern "great house." Like most of the hot-country hotels, it was mainly something to keep out rain and sun, and between the roof, made of bamboo poles covered with corrugated iron, and the side walls there was a gap to let the breeze blow through. The bed also was in the old-fashioned hot-country style—simply a four-poster frame with canvas stretched tightly across it, a sheet

spread over this, and another for cover, with a mosquito-net canopy over all.

Next morning we drove out to the Jesuit college on the shores of the lake, where a tepid breeze blows constantly. It is an attractive place, built round a garden in which, among the flower-beds, stand a number of stone images of ancient Indian gods. Some 200 upper-class Nicaraguan boys can prepare here for the university, and, aside from the fact that—as the Leon editor who gave me the giant *aguacate* seemed to think—the Conservative government may have spent here a disproportionate amount of its educational funds, it is something with which Nicaraguans may well be content.

The amiable young priest who showed us about had been educated at an English public school, and the physics teacher who showed us his radio and his moving pictures of fleas, growing plants, and other interesting things also spoke English. The building had no architect, the former said, simply builders, and he was properly proud of the open-air assembly or theatre. Its side "walls" consisted of a double colonnade, with balcony reading-alcoves ingeniously tucked in under the open eaves, and a stage at one end. When the rains came and the wind blew in from the lake, he said, the water threshed it from end to end.

The Indian idols, he said, were probably about 600 years old. They had all been picked up about the lake, and had been carved from the basalt and lava rock of the region by Indians who had probably drifted down from Mexico. Several had crocodile backs, crocodile-skins being the common armor of Indian warriors in those days.

The young priest went swimming in the lake every

day despite local stories of man-eating sharks. It was a pity, he said, we couldn't spend some time cruising about the lake—if they built a canal, it would make one of the prettiest rides in the world. You couldn't treat Nicaraguan schoolboys like English boys of the same age, he said, nor the people either. Both were in some ways rather like "children." The Nicaraguan grammar-schools were very poor, he said, and the Indians had been just about left to shift for themselves. Only a dictator, or a "strong" government, he thought, could handle the Nicaraguans in their present stage. At the school they tried to teach their students that they must do more for the peon class unless they wanted some sort of "bolshevism," later on, to do it for them, expensively.

X

About half-way between Grenada and Managua is Masaya, and up in the hills from Masaya is the Vaughn coffee-plantation, one of the show fincas of Central America. We drove nearly to it one late afternoon from Managua, between tea-time and dinner; out past the crater lakes that lie above Managua, past the farm of the hapless Señor Solerzano and other *finqueros*, and up into the hills and the cooler air that coffee likes. And it was interesting to see how easily the automobile does now what was almost an "expedition" in 1913, when I took the better part of a day by railroad and mule to get up to the Vaughn plantation.

The more beautiful of the crater lakes, by the way,—the one which the Managua laundresses turn into a laundry—is supposed to be "bottomless," but Colonel Durham, the American engineer, who hoped some day to

pave all Managua, if ever there was money enough, told me that he had made soundings and had found nothing deeper than 800 feet. But the tree-lined pit, with the sheet of green water at the bottom of it, is so deceptively huge that what I took from the top to be a small fish splashing on its surface far below, turned out, on closer scrutiny, to be a life-sized man in swimming.

The elder Vaughn was one of those Britishers who go out to the ends of the earth, settle down and stay there, and meanwhile "do themselves well" and scrupulously maintain the manner and customs of their unalterable isle. He had come out to Nicaragua some thirty years before, and lived, breathed, and dreamed coffee ever since. There was no trick of the trade, from planting the seed in tamped-down earth, to force its roots to develop strength, up through the niceties of pruning so as to increase "spread" and leave a sort of air-flue around the trunk, which he didn't have at his fingers' ends.

His dark-green, compact, wide-spreading trees, heavy with berries—he would tell you how many pounds of coffee such and such would bear as the horses walked down the cool avenues under high-arching shade—were as different as could be from the pale, straggly trees of the plantation across the way, left, in the easy-going native style, more or less to shift for themselves.

"People tell me they have a million trees," he said. "I wouldn't trade one of mine for five hundred of them."

There was not a stick nor stone on the black, soft loam which men were constantly cleaning and brushing. Above the rows of low coffee-trees towered the big, buttressed trunks of *ceibas* and *guayabas de monte;* nearer

the ground spread the thin shade of *maderas negras* and mangoes, breadfruit, avocados, and *zapotes*. Here and there alligator-pears strewed the ground as apples do at home.

The house itself, away up here in the mountains, was as spotless as a man-o'-warsman. One tiptoed across the porch floor for fear of tracking in dirt. *Punch*, *The Weekly Times*, and *The Illustrated London News* were on the centre-table, and the father's and son's pipes lay in a slanting row, one behind the other, like soldiers.

"We try to live in the English fashion," said the elder Vaughn at breakfast-time, "so far as it's possible in such a barbarous place." We had the first oatmeal I had seen in weeks. There were kippers and orange marmalade. The latter, he said, was put up by one of the best London houses—"the only people in England who know how to make proper marmalade."

I ventured on a story current at the time in New York, about the Brooklyn policeman who found a dead horse on the corner of Kosciusko Street and, after asking everybody about the station-house how to spell the name, so that he might report the incident in the blotter, and scratching his own head in despair, finally jammed on his helmet and stumped out, saying that he was going to drag that horse round to Bedford Avenue. Both father and son listened somewhat uneasily to this narrative, the father finally remarking, after due study: "After all, he could have looked it up in the telephone-book, couldn't he?"

A fine life, coffee-planting, if you don't mind living away from cities, and it was like going out of Eden as the son and I started our horses down-hill toward the steamy lowlands. Something was said about jobs of one

sort and another, and all at once the younger man, who had said little before this, was off.

"I suppose this looks like a bed of roses to you. . . . Well, it's a healthy life and there's good money in it, sometimes. There's nothing to worry about. That is to say, nothing really to worry about, though my father worries enough. And you get a trip to Europe every year or two. But a plantation won't run itself—you've got to live up here. I went to school in England; all my friends are over there. . . . Why, you get so sick of coffee, and shade-trees, and the whole bally show, you can't look a coffee-tree in the face! If it doesn't rain for a whole day during the rainy season, my father stalks up and down like a crazy man. If a shade-tree falls and kills a few coffee-trees, he nearly has hysterics. I can't take it that way. If a shade-tree blows down I'm jolly glad of it. It gives me something to do, and I go out with a gang of men and work 'em like the devil seeing how quickly we can turn it into firewood."

The second generation! Hundreds of planters all over the American tropics would have given their eyeteeth for this young Englishman's chance, and he would have traded it then, I suppose, for any comfortable desk in a city office. The finca could have been bought for about a quarter of a million dollars.

I had often wondered what had happened to it and to the Vaughns, especially after the phrase "lives and property of foreigners" began to reappear in the cables from Nicaragua toward the end of the Sacasa revolution. Well, it seems that young Mr. Vaughn finally got away and had his fling. He went to California, married an American girl, and tried fruit-farming on a small scale there, doing most of his own work, American

style, and learning what earning one's living without much capital, outside the tropics, is like.

One day a cable came from his father, who had sold the plantation to somebody who couldn't meet the payments and gone back to England. Would he go back to Nicaragua and take the place over? The son accepted, packed up wife, babies, bag, and baggage, and returned to the hills above Masaya. History was now repeating itself, so they said in Managua when I asked about the Vaughns. The second Vaughn was now as keen about coffee as his father had been—I just had time, after finding that he was in Nicaragua, to hurry to the station to see him and his family off for the well-to-do planter's usual summer vacation abroad. . . .

XI

It was while saying good-by to the Vaughns that I bumped into another chapter of 1913 history—a young English lady whom I had met at a dance then, and who now had a husband and two husky youngsters, and an enchanting walled garden, where, on turf almost like English turf, and shut away from the dust and smells of the town, people gathered every afternoon for tea.

Almost any flat-dweller would have been charmed by that fragrant oasis—by the dinner in the open *corridor* beside the inner patio, with a fountain splashing lazily amidst the flowers; by the repose and spaciousness of that colonial life, in which books and papers and people, instead of becoming, because of their mere numbers, a weariness to the flesh, all borrow a certain romance as reminders of a far-away and greater world. But the English lady knew it so well that great cities

had the romance for her, and she wished she might "roll London, Paris, and New York into one and live in the heart of it."

"Just think," she said, "of how few people, really, make this world go round, and what a privilege it must be to know them! I was reading the other day about somebody in California who was experimenting with electrons—a man like that may discover something that will change a whole civilization. Think of—oh, anybody! Premier Baldwin, for instance. . . ."

One felt almost Pierre-Loti-like as, an actual citizen of those far-off Babels which seemed to her so glamourous, one said good-by and tramped back through the deserted midnight street toward Luponé's, with the heat lightning flaming constantly, over behind the dead volcanoes.

Next morning I was off on the down train again, for Corinto and the north-bound boat. At one little station there was a marine sitting astride a noticeably neat little saddle-horse. I stepped off the train, while the engine paused for breath, to ask where they found such animals.

"Why, this one belonged to a captain," he said; "but they killed that captain. But we got thirty-six of 'em, and only lost two of our men!" So *that* was all right, and mathematically proved, evidently, in the mind of the cheerful leather-neck!

Farmers were beginning to work their fields again on the rich level plain of Leon. It is so flat and open, and naturally a garden, that one almost forgets one is in the tropics. They were good to look at, these occasional farmers, bare to the waist, their sinuous brown torsos without an ounce of surplus flesh, and seemingly

without a drop of sweat as, with their machetes, they laboriously but with neat thoroughness hacked the weeds off just under the surface.

As we passed Chinandega again I tried to pick out, on the slopes of El Viejo, another coffee-plantation I had visited on that other trip. That one was just starting out, the property of a young Nicaraguan physician just back from his medical course in Philadelphia. I was for climbing "The Old Fellow" then, that beautiful brown cone which rises right up from the sea like something built by hands; and, as the Nicaraguan's finca was part way up and a natural stopping-place, he was glad enough to leave his apothecary's shop in Chinandega and spend the night in the hills.

"It's the nights that bother you," he said, as our mules pat-patted through the thick dust. (A Mr. De Shon, whose son had gone to Cornell and become a mighty pitcher there, had recommended me to the young physician and loaned me one of his own superior saddle-mules.) "It's the nights that bother you. I used to go to the theatre a good deal in the States, and the opera. There's nothing to do here but make love, and if you keep at that long enough you're bound to get married. . . ."

His place was a bit low for the best coffee, only about 1,500 feet, but it had a superb view, and after supper that evening we looked down on the lights of Chinandega, miles below, and those of the U. S. S. *Denver* then twinkling in the harbor of Corinto. I was off with his overseer before daybreak next morning, half-way by mule, and then, for a couple of thousand feet or so, on foot, up a grade as steep as a gravel bank—a roof, in fact, from the gable of which you could look down on

the volcanoes and tumbled mountains of three republics.

It was cold up here, too—cold with the height and cold with the dawn—and over the divide the mists rolled like a waterfall and the wind blew a gale. But from the top, until the mists which gather so quickly after sunup in the rainy season had closed in, one could see Momotombo, pouring out his white and yellow smoke, and in front of and behind him a row of lesser volcanoes, smoking chimneys all of them, with cottony clouds lying flat above the lowlands and the whole shot through with shafts of the rising sunlight.

The other way was Fonseca Bay, and the hills of Honduras and Salvador, and all about a tropical world enriched and brightened by the rains into such greens and softnesses as our pallid northern world scarcely dreams of—textures of velvet, greens of a parrakeet.

The thing to do would have been to sit there on this roof of the world and watch the sun swing across the sky and this tumbled mountain country change with it. But the north-bound steamer was due at Corinto, the mists were closing in, and there was nothing for it but to scramble down. By the time the mules pattered into the glare and heat of Chinandega again El Viejo was wrapped in a cloud cap, dark and opaque as lead.

The *Denver*, I remember, next day lay still as a white water-lily on the blue harbor of Corinto, the sun blazing down on an awning amidships, beneath which, with the crew banked on three sides and the officers seated on the fourth, two lightweights were about to begin a ten-round fight.

"This," bellowed the master of ceremonies, "is Provinzano, of Genoa! He's goin' to fight a Mexican! . . .

And this is Medina, captain of the head. He goin' to fight a dago!" . . .

A good-natured roar went up from three sides of the ring, and the Nicaraguan *commandante*, who had been watching with detached amusement the preliminary examples of "el box," suddenly became serious. These were no pink-and-white gringos, but "Latins" both, playing the enemy's game in the enemy's country!

The Italian was the more sensitive of the two, with a whimsical, almost girlish smile and a wide-eyed, questioning stare which, when he showed that underneath it he was thinking every instant and could take any amount of punishment, became fascinating. The Mexican was a bronze statue, perfectly made, with a head that might have been taken from an old Roman coin. His eyes never telegraphed his leads, his thin lips were closed in a hard, straight line, and in action or in his corner his expression suggested that of some subtle mediæval priest.

It was anybody's fight until the final gong, and the tropical rain which tumbled out of the sky somewhere along in the middle of it roared down unnoticed. The smiling boy from Genoa lost the decision, but on shore that night he was treating his shipmates—blond huskies from the Middle West—and none the worse for wear. The Mexican had duties aboard ship, but the friends who had yelled for him to "knock the smile off the Wop!" didn't forget him now. "A good kid, Mex!" they said, puffing their shore cigars. . . .

There were three American ships in Corinto harbor now, instead of one, as in 1913, and a fresh transport of boys—rawer troops, it seemed, than those already scattered up and down the railroad line—was just coming

ashore. It was abominably hot; the steamship agent wouldn't sell a ticket until I had permission to leave the country, and the *commandante* wouldn't give this, he said, until he had permission from the foreign office at Managua!

How was a traveller to know they had any such regulation as this? It was like asking foreigners sailing from Seattle to go back to Washington! The *commandante* shrugged his shoulders and reminded the perspiring stranger that Nicaragua was in a state of war. Possibly all laws and regulations in the United States didn't seem logical to foreigners. Logic was not his province. Strangers should know the laws of the countries in which they ventured to travel. The law was the law.

A dash to the consulate, at the other end of town, sweat streaming, the dismal prospect of missing the boat and trailing all the way back to the capital whipping one through the ankle-deep dust. Finally, after another of those frantic episodes which seems so tragic at the moment, so absurd in retrospect, after a telephone to the legation in the capital, another thence to the foreign office, another from there back to the *commandante* again, the stamp was given and fee collected.

"Little countries," said the *commandante* sweetly, revenging himself to some extent for all those strange ships lying out there in the harbor and for all the blue-eyed, red-faced young soldiers crowding his little town, "have their laws as well as big ones. The foreign office gives permission for you to sail, but this is the last time. *La ul-ti-ma vez!*" he concluded, rolling the words slowly and with a certain relish.

In the midst of all this hullabaloo I contrived to ask about my old friend Paniagua, the doctor-coffee-grower,

from whose finca on the slopes of El Viejo we had looked down on the lights of Chinandega and the *Denver* fourteen years before.

"Why, he's right here!" said the consul. "They burnt him out of house and home in Chinandega. He's living in a cottage just a step down the beach!"

So, indeed, he was, and, as he had foreseen when he remarked that if you make love long enough you were likely to get married, he now had a wife and several children. There was no time for reminiscences, but while I galloped back to the steamship agents he withdrew to put on a fresh suit of whites, and we met again at the dock just as the little *Acajutla* was putting off.

Yes, he still had the finca, but he hadn't got rich. Indeed, in the recent fighting round about Chinandega he had lost his house and everything in it, and had no insurance, worse luck. Now that the row was over and the Americans in charge, he hoped the country would settle down. That "free and fair" election sounded good as far as it went, though for his part, as a Liberal, Sacasa seemed the really constitutional president. During Chamorro's brief reign, after his coup d'état, the Conservatives had put him in prison, notwithstanding the fact that he was a physician serving with the Red Cross. They had taken all his horses and mules and demanded a lot of rice. But he didn't have any rice, he said, and didn't know where to get it. Never mind about that, said the Chamorroistas; produce the rice somehow or other within thirty-six hours, or they'd show him something.

"That's the way it goes in these revolutions," the little doctor said, with a sour grin; "if you stay where you are, they put you in prison. If you run away, they say

you are 'conspiring' against them. They get you in any case!"

The steamy day was cooling at last and the sun sinking into the Pacific, as we slid past the low roofs and palms of Corinto and, swinging round into the deep-sea swell and breeze, started up the coast for Fonseca Bay and Honduras's island port of Amapala. Nicaragua and her troubles shrunk to a brown rim of coast-line, with El Viejo rising sharp against the evening sky, and then night dropped quickly on a coast as black as ink and, for all that one could see, as deserted as when the Spaniards came.

HONDURAS

CHAPTER V

HONDURAS

I

Honduras is almost twice as large as Costa Rica and more than six times as large as El Salvador. It has minerals, probably the best cattle country in Central America, and more bananas are exported from its east-coast plantations—all owned by foreigners—than from any of the other Caribbean banana neighborhoods with the exception of Jamaica.

Its people are as naturally capable as those of the other republics, and there seems no reason to believe that, with the better transportation and the increasing peace which is coming to the isthmus, it will not eventually hold its own with its sister republics. For a variety of reasons, however, it has remained comparatively poor and undeveloped, and more or less the door-mat of its stronger neighbors.

It is a tangle of mountains, like the other countries, but an ungracious geological turn took the volcanic chain which crosses the other four out into the Pacific when it reached what is now Honduras, and it lacks the rich volcanic slopes which have given coffee-plantations to all the rest. Its position, in the middle of the row of republics, with comparatively powerful Guatemala on the one side and turbulent Nicaragua on the other, have dragged it into rows and political adventures which its inhabitants, with nothing much to lose and a sufficiently well-developed revolutionary habit of their own, were generally nothing loath to take up.

It is the only one of the five republics which has no railroad to its capital—indeed, until the automobile and an excellent mountain road changed things, Tegucigalpa was one of the "buried" towns of Spanish America, three days by mule from a west-coast port, itself rather bothersome to get to, and a week or so from the Caribbean. There are no railroads now, on the Pacific side, and on the other only short arms through the flat coast country, mostly used by the fruit companies for carrying their own bananas.

In 1913 the journey from Corinto to Tegucigalpa, less than 200 miles by airplane, took me nearly a fortnight. There was a mangrove swamp up a muddy river running into the Bay of Fonseca—a dismal place, with buzzards, steamy heat, fever-weakened natives languidly sliding logs off their shoulders, and a fierce white overseer, with riding-breeches, high boots, and a revolver, the whole something out of Joseph Conrad—where we loitered for a day or two, taking on timber. There was another wait at La Unión, in Salvador, while a *chabasco* roared across the bay and the little ship dragged her anchors. Then a three-hour row in a high-sided dugout, with an indigo canopy "*muy bien pintado!*" as its owner pointed out, urging its merits as a ferry—back on our trail to Amapala, where, though it is twenty-five or thirty miles from the mainland, incoming passengers must land and go through the customs. Then a three days' wait at Amapala, for a launch to the mainland port of San Lorenzo; more waiting until mules could be sent down from Perspiré, half a day's journey up the trail, and, finally, three days' muleback climbing up to the little mountain capital. Tegucigalpa is easier to get to now, but still remote enough.

It was to Honduras's north coast—now the rich banana country—that defaulters, banished lotteries, and other furniture of the "classical" Central America used to flock; and their remnants, and the picturesque racial mixtures of its beach and the near-by islands—old-time crossings of white pirates, runaway and deported slaves from Jamaica and Haiti, and native Indians—still give this part of Honduras a touch of "Cabbages and Kings." It was at the north-coast port of Puerto Cortez, indeed, that O. Henry got that glimpse of Central America which helped to fix the outlines of a popular picture which has little application to the highlands.

II

We had as passengers out of Corinto that evening, a Nicaraguan Liberal and his wife, going off to visit friends in Salvador until skies were clearer at home; two somewhat dubious-looking "artistas" flourishing, on the least excuse, show-bills picturing themselves attired in a few beads; a German coffee-growing family returning to Guatemala from their vacation in the old country; an immense mulatto woman and her pretty young daughter, also itinerant stage-folk; and an American travelling-man, a West Coast old-timer, who leaned on the rail, as the *Acajutla* rolled lazily through the tepid dark, and philosophized, as men do at such times, on himself and life in general.

Little to choose, he thought, between Nicaraguan "Liberals" and "Conservatives." Let the "Liberals" get into office once, and they would be as hard-boiled and out for themselves as anybody. The "Conservatives" had the wealthy families behind them, but also they

had the strongest and most capable men—a good deal like Democrats and Republicans at home.

Past us, as we gossiped, the obese mulatto's daughter strolled up and down on her high heels, her rolling eyes flashing thunderbolts. Nothing quite like her could come out of the North—she might have been called "*Flor de Corinto*" and have stepped off a cigar-box lid. A child in years, freshness, and simplicity, she had the shape, physical poise, "attack," as the singers say, of a woman of thirty. So much as glance in her direction, and her pupils would dilate and a wave of something hot and dangerous vibrate from her whole being.

She irritated the old drummer, who had seen too much of women in his day, he said. That "Cielito Lindo"—the Mexican waltz she was forever singing, in the microscopic music-room amidships, to the appreciative Germans—was a good piece, but the little bonehead didn't know how to sing it. Artist? Hell! He could do better than that himself. Yes, he'd chased 'em good and plenty in his time, but was through with 'em now, and glad of it.

Ha! . . . There was an old *finquero* down in Costa Rica once, when he first began working these countries, who had a girl in San José. Every fortnight or so he'd come up to town to see her. Well, once the old man wrote that he was coming in and that he'd sent round to the house a box of specially fancy alligator-pears and a case of French wine. You know they have an idea down here that *aguacates* are great stuff to make love on. The drummer was new to the tropics then, and young, and the girl liked him better than she did the old *finquero*, and she sent for him to come round, and they

jolly well ate up all the alligator-pears and drank up all the French wine before the old man got there! . . .

Ever been abroad? He'd been to Italy once—all these little countries are a bum sort of Italy. Venice was the place he'd always wanted to see, and he was on his way there once, but he met an Italian girl on the train and what she gave him was so strong that he spent two months in the hospital instead. Probably never would see Venice now. . . .

He was fed up with the "road," too. The hell of it was, down in these countries, there was nothing to do and no place to go and you met the same string of drummers all along the line. Only one decent hotel in a place, only one steamer every week or two—there was no way to dodge 'em. Same old song-and-dance everywhere. Sitting in the bars of their rotten little hotels, night after night, shaking dice for the drinks and talking eternally the same line of bull. . . . Then everybody into a carriage and off after the girls—bah, what a life! Well, one more season and he was through. He'd put his money into a little coffee finca—and here, from his inside pocket, came some snap-shots showing him in riding-clothes, standing proudly with a group of peons amongst the young trees—and in another year, thank God, he'd settle down there for good. . . .

Tigre Island, a perfect cone of green velvet rising two thousand feet out of indigo water, with the little white town of Amapala clinging to its beach, was alongside when we turned out at sunup next morning. Fonseca Bay was still as an inland lake, saffron acacia-trees flamed against the white walls on shore, and the air was heavy, damp, and fragrant, like that of a hothouse.

Boatmen—for you anchor in the roadstead—descend

on you here, with the usual hullabaloo and apparent confusion, but there is a kind of friendly efficiency underneath the scramble, and if the traveller will only let matters take their course nothing is lost and everything done in time.

The *commandante's* headquarters, where every one must go in person to get his stamp for the mainland, is at the right of the crescent village, under a great *guanacaste*-tree, close to the water. There are loopholes in the fortress-like stone walls, and through these loopholes the *commandante's* secretary, seeing but unseen, spots everybody who lands at the wharf a stone's throw across the water. And, as you wait with the others to have your passport stamped, the secretary will now and again peer through his private slit in the thick walls and mutter: "Um! . . . that man in the gray suit and the white sombrero . . . he hasn't turned up yet. . . ."

It was quaint to find that the *commandante* might know what sort of a necktie one was wearing, while the ingenuous traveller, sweating over his luggage across a furlong of salt water, fancied himself arriving unobserved. Loopholes in fortress walls, strangers fuming and fussing out there in the biting white glare, the secretary here in the cool shade studying, spider-and-fly fashion across the water—one felt sleepily, in Amapala's steamy heat, that there was a story of some sort here, without knowing exactly what. . . .

I had missed this bit on that earlier visit, but recalled vividly the awful little Hotel Morazan of those days (it still exists, though possibly different now), where ducks, chickens, more or less disreputable dogs, and possibly a pig or two, paraded in and out of one's

room. A bright-eyed *mestizo* clerk, in one of the steamship offices, sat opposite me in the dining-room then, and the first evening at dinner shouted "*Muera á los Yankis!*" and suddenly suspecting, for the first time apparently, that I might understand, asked me to pardon him if I were an American.

An old fellow from the interior, a carpenter who looked like Porfirio Diaz, was even more vehement. What earthly right had we to threaten a protectorate over Honduras? "There's no canal from San Lorenzo!" No, it was only a scheme of those cursed Yankee millionaires for grabbing the country. What did they have, those gringos, with all their money and numbers? The Hondureños were cleverer than they. "*Tenemos mas talentos que ellos!*" he bellowed, "*Si—MAS!*" But by the saints, if they did come, the Hondureños would rise as one man and drive them out. And they could do it, one way or another, even if it took poison. "*Si . . . venéno!*" roared the old carpenter, glaring down the table.

The obstreperous young man, somewhat reconciled to me by this time, winked and explained *sotto voce* that they "were more 'bravo' in Tegucigalpa," where the carpenter came from, "bravo" meaning not "brave" but "wild" or "savage," and being commonly applied to "wild" Indians or bulls that will fight.

We got away at three A. M. then, after a two days' wait, without even disturbing a duck. Amapala was black but for a few lamps; the islands roundabout were inky black; the whole world was black, and warm and soft with the animal-like softness and warmth of the tropic night. The sea crinkled and sparkled with phosphorescence. It flashed along the beach as the shallow

surf rolled slowly in, flashed from the launch propeller, and rolled back and spread out from the bow like the spangles and jet of a ball gown. No one spoke, the young officer who had let me accompany him closed his eyes, his women-folk curled themselves in the fashion that comes easily to those accustomed to the discomforts of Central American travel, the big-shouldered half-breed hunched over the wheel, sleepily puffing a cigarette, and so we put-putted on until the East began to turn pink and the low cottony clouds filling the wrinkles in the Honduranean hills turned to gold. They turned to gold and began pouring down the "draws" in which they were lying, like molten lava, and gradually the world grew light.

Away to the southeast El Viejo still lifted his head; curving round to the northwest were the tumbled ranges of three republics; and, all about, the archipelago of Fonseca Bay.

This time there was no wait at Amapala. We got away in a gasoline launch in mid-morning, over those same waters that had sparkled like jewels on that other night. El Viejo still lifted his head to the southeastward, and all round the beautiful bay, rose, in the far distance, the shouldering mountains.

The Nicaraguan's wife, of whom I had been but vaguely aware on the steamer the evening before, sat directly opposite me now in all her terrors. She was one of those leathery, hawk-faced females, determined to be seasick, of which there is generally one, at least, on every Spanish-American steamship, cross-country stage, or automobile—females who swab themselves with vile perfumery between groans, constantly hold their handkerchiefs over their faces to keep from in-

haling any fresh air, and consume, during the shortest and most peaceful journey, enough stimulants, sedatives, asperin, headache-tablets, and antihysteria remedies to kill an elephant.

The beautiful bay was like glass, but she and her long-suffering husband had fortified themselves against the rigors of the crossing with a quart bottle of cognac, and as the launch got under way she elevated this bottle, let perhaps a tumblerful gurgle down her throat without blinking, emitted several of those inimitable "*Ai-ai-ai's!*" and prepared for the worst.

San Lorenzo seemed unchanged since 1913, and, though a half-hearted attempt had been made to build a pier, the launch passengers had to pick their way ashore along two wabbly planks. But the touring-cars waiting for us and the brisk fashion with which the drivers, half-Yankeeized native mechanics, hustled us aboard and started for the hills showed very quickly that the journey was quite another thing from what it used to be.

I am no enthusiast over motor-cars, but must confess that when one knows the punishment inflicted on man and beast in getting over hard mountain trails under a tropical sun, it is a positive delight to loll back on comfortable upholstery and let an engine do the work. To cover in four or five hours what otherwise would take several days of sweating, swearing, and spurring to accomplish, not to speak of forage and food —there's a certain restful magic in that. Every time the gears shifted and the big car went drumming up the grade one could hear the far-off, ghostly heehaws of generations of liberated mules. . . .

Perspiré, which used to be the stopping-place for

the first night, was there before we knew it. They are rather charming, these little old villages in the Honduras hills, as you look down on their red-tiled roofs and flaming acacia-trees, with the sun blazing on the white walls and moss-covered dome of the plaza church —more charming, perhaps, as you sweep cheerily through or past them in a motor than when that pleasant tension is relaxed and one finds oneself marooned in their all but inanimate life.

As we paused a few minutes for a lemonade I remembered the little inn where I had stopped before and Doña Engracia de Rivera, its somewhat Bœotian and forbidding proprietress, who stood in the doorway in a loose Mother Hubbard, a cigarette dangling from her mouth, as I rode up. She was ready for me in more senses than one, and to the first question—as to why she had not answered my telegram of the day before, let alone sent the mules I asked for—she let loose a torrent of indignant eloquence, calling on heaven to witness the unreasonableness of this gringo who expected to have mules in San Lorenzo when there were none in her *potrero;* and so on, till there was naught to do but to dismount and ask where one might put one's things and get a bath.

Doña Engracia gave a hoot at this, and said there was good bathing in the river. As I started thither, a towel over one shoulder, there was a partial explanation of her inhospitality in the shape of half a dozen bouncing young country girls, who came rushing to the balcony to see the stranger go by. A relative of Doña Engracia's had been married, it seemed, the day before; my wire had arrived in the midst of the festivities and been overlooked. Even now horses were being

THE LANDLADY OF THE WAYSIDE INN AT THE VILLAGE OF PERSPIRE.

THE AUTHOR'S MULE-BOY ON THE SAN LORENZO TEGUCIGALPA TRAIL.

A TEGUCIGALPA SCHOOL-TEACHER AT THE HEAD OF HER FLOCK.

saddled to take the young couple and their friends back to their various homes. Attractive, unspoiled girls they were, with long hair hanging loose down their backs and something about them which gave one an odd sense of stepping back into an earlier century.

The river was, indeed, a good bathroom, full of delightful little pools, with smooth rocks to hold onto, while the hurrying, tepid water floated one's body down-stream. Mothers scrubbing their little children, *mestizo* girls washing their long black hair, ox-drivers tired from their all-night's tramps were all bathing together. They squatted on the flat stones, or stood up and poured gourds full of water over their smooth brown flesh, which always seems so much less unclothed under the glare of a tropical sun than the sickly white flesh of the white man.

The wedding party clattered off with noisy good-bys, and left Perspiré to its normal silence, broken only by the locust-like drone of school-children studying aloud in a shady room across the plaza, a barefooted little girl coming into Doña Engracia's shop for three centavos worth of rice, and some little boys tormenting a lizard. We were off to bed with the chickens, after supper and an hour's drowsy gossip and smoking by feeble lamplight; then, in the middle of one's dreams, came the pat-pat of bare feet and a knock on the door, coffee by candle-light, and so into the saddle and off to real climbing, under a sky full of stars.

It was not at Doña Engracia's that we stopped this time, apparently, and I asked the waitress who brought the *refrescos* where we might be. This inn was run, she said, by Doña Engracia's niece, and Doña Engracia was "in the cemetery." . . .

Beyond Perspiré the road climbs rapidly, and we were soon in noble country. The little cigar-box girl, still rolling her tremendous eyes, liked everything, and kept singing her Mexican waltzes about hearts and flowers and dreams and *amor,* her *r's* rippling unconsciously like a brook rippling over pebbles. And the light-hearted "*La . . . La . . . La-la's!*" of the chorus to "Cielito Lindo" and the despairing "*Ai . . . Ai . . . Ai's!*" of the seasick Nicaraguan lady mingled constantly in a queer sort of antiphony.

"*Ai . . . Ai . . .!*" went the latter, as if she were being drawn and quartered. "*Corazón de Jesús! . . . O mi estomago! . . . No se puede! . . . Madre mia! . . . Jesús! . . . Ai . . . Ai . . . Ai-i-i!*"

Just as the car swung round the shoulder of the mountain, with the valley dropping a thousand feet or so just beyond the highway wall, and a vista that would take your breath away falling away clear down to the far-off, misty cone of Tigre and the sea—just, in short, as you were about to soar above mundane considerations altogether—the Nicaraguan harpy would determine to be ill again! . . .

La Venta, where one used to stop on the second day out for lunch, slipped by without a stop, and so presently did the level table-land of Sabana Grande and the village named after it. It was here that Frederick Palmer came in out of the rain one day to a hearty Yankee greeting and the handshake of old "Don Alberto" Smith, and that I, following Palmer's trail on that other trip, also found Don Alberto, ill in bed but nowise reduced in spirits.

He was a big, loose-jointed Californian who had come down to Honduras a generation or so before to

work in the Rosario mines near Tegucigalpa and stayed there. He had brought up a family, sent one boy to the University of Pennsylvania, and remained, through all the ups and downs of a white man who comes to the tropics without capital, unalterably Yankee. His house at Sabana Grande was the most comfortable stopping-place on the Tegucigalpa road, and, with his own family and the other folks' children to whom he had given a roof, he had become a sort of gringo patriarch.

Propped up in bed, old Don Alberto proceeded to discourse about "these people" in that slap-bang style which you get at its best from some old-timer who wouldn't go back to "God's country" if he had the chance. One of these smart young native squirts, he said, one of their intellectuals, had told him that he wouldn't go to the California fair because there wouldn't be any art there—a few sewing-machines, perhaps, but nothing worth seeing—and would rather spend his money in Europe.

"Art!" bellowed Don Alberto, "what does that dashed half-breed know about art? If he does go abroad, he'll only blow all his father's money in, in Paris. I says to him: 'Young man, leave the art out of it. I don't know nothing about art, but America's the richest, strongest nation in the world and you might as well swallow it?'" The old man gave a hoot, and stretched out his big, knotted hands. He called in one of his daughters, told her to see that I was properly taken care of, wished that Palmer would send him the book he had promised, and swore he'd be dancing the highland fling when I came down the trail again.

A German engineer-soldier-of-fortune rode out from Don Alberto's with me next morning and talked

all the way to Tegucigalpa about women and gold. He had seen more of the first than the second, but there was German thoroughness in his technical knowledge and he kept punctuating his monologue on the one with a mining prospector's comments on the rocks over which we climbed.

Pity about that boy we had seen at Don Alberto's last night—the one with that narrow-faced girl chasing round after him. She could hurt him, that girl could; he'd be lost unless he got back to the States. The kid took 'em too seriously—didn't know how to take 'em and leave 'em and not let 'em interfere with your work. He was like that himself, once. . . . He had come out from the old country when he was twenty-two, gone to Nevada, and made six thousand dollars in one year and gone to New York with it. There he ran across a girl and married her and took her to Mexico with him. He didn't know anything about women then. He was like that kid. But she taught him fast enough. That was one reason why he was down here in Honduras. They couldn't hurt him now. All the time he was with one he was saying to himself: "All right, old girl, I shake you to-morrow!" But that kid hadn't learned that. . . .

He'd found a nice girl a few months before—got her from an old woman and took her on a prospecting trip into Olancho. But she got fond of him, and that was a bother and so he gave her a horse and told her he didn't want her any more. . . . Zere, dot iss callt drift . . . und dot is conglomerate . . . dere is neffer gold in der secondary rock and yet how many of zese foolish fellows you see working zere . . .

And where was the girl now? Oh, she had a job in

a hotel. Said she's had enough to do with men, they were all alike. A nice girl, but a girl like zat is no good. You can alvays get dem, but dey're no good when you do. Zey won't work and just take your money. After zey have lived wit a native and been beaten some, zey get to know ze difference and are glad enough to live mit a white man. . . . Yes, all zese geologists have to give mine-owners a lot of long words so as to hold zeir jobs, but only a little of it is scientific. If zere was any sure way of telling what was underground zere wouldn't be any failures!

All morning it went on more or less like this, and toward noon we came out on that windy plateau from which you can look down on Tegucigalpa. The wind whistled ceaselessly and it was almost cold. An Indian woman and her husband came to the fence of their pasture to offer us an aromatic, oily sort of fruit known as *matasano* (kill-health). We had ridden long on a dusty road and were glad enough of it, in spite of its name. The German, stretching upward in his saddle, took big breaths of the clear plateau air.

"Zere are fine girls up in zese cool hills also," he said earnestly, "but it is very hard to get zem!"

A Hondureño rode with us the latter part of that morning, the masculine counterpart of our groaning Nicaraguense, who wore a heavy shawl wound about his neck and stopped at every wayside *tambo* for a shot of red-hot *aguardiente*, and then, gloomier than ever, head sunk between his shoulders, pushed on to the next place as if pursued by furies.

There are, or used to be, many such on the Central American highland trails—bundled up as the hot-country folk are wont to be when they go to highlands,

stopping constantly for drinks, and, pictures of misery, pushing on restlessly as they beat a constant tattoo with their long spurs on the ribs of their patient Rosinantes.

As soon as one of these travellers arrived at an inn he would sling his hammock and, throwing himself into it on his back, legs dangling on either side, give himself up to the most dismal moans and sighs, varied by elaborate clearing of his throat and spitting on the floor. You would sometimes think your neighbor was ill or in pain, only to find later that that was only his manner of making himself comfortable. "R-r-r-r! Wuff! Ugh! Ugh! Ugh! Wuff! . . ." and so on, until he had finished his siesta.

It was with this one, unshaven, gloomy, pickled in *aguardiente,* that the German prospector and I, on that other visit, rode up the cobblestoned street of the little capital and through an arched stone gateway—*zaguan,* as they say—into a patio, with a comfortable old sheep in the middle of it, which might have been lifted from some hill town of Spain.

This time we came hooting in in a big Cadillac, only five hours out from San Lorenzo, through the plaza where the Sunday-night band was playing, and up to the door of what used to be a fortress-like old colonial house and was now the ambitiously named but dismal "Hotel de los Ambos Mundos."

III

Tegucigalpa has clear air, good water, a cool climate, picturesque surroundings, and all the raw materials of an attractive mountain capital. Its very isolation gives it a certain restful charm, but that same isolation, and the general poverty of the country, make it a slightly

lonesome post for most foreigners to be stationed in for any length of time.

In addition to the more or less natural difficulties, already mentioned, with which Honduras has had to contend, she was hindered in her economic development until very recent years with an enormous foreign debt. This debt was largely due to loans made in the late sixties for the building of a railroad across the country from Puerto Cortez on the Caribbean to the Gulf of Fonseca on the Pacific. At a time when the Panama Canal was still a dream, when the Nicaraguan seemed the likelier route, there were many—including United States Minister Squiers, who wrote enthusiastically and in detail about the Central America of those days—who were convinced that the solution of the trans-Isthmian problem was a railroad across Honduras.

Bonds to a nominal value of over $25,000,000 were issued. Most of the money actually paid in seems to have gone into the pockets of the local politicians and the foreign promoters, with the result that only about fifty miles of the road were built. Interest payments were made for a time out of the principal. Even these were discontinued in 1872; the bonds dropped on the European exchanges from 85½ to 1¼, and the theoretical interest charges, accumulating meanwhile, presently became a kind of international joke. They amounted in 1916, for instance, to something like $127,000,000, so that the mere interest on the interest was several times the little country's entire income. Finally, in 1925, an arrangement was entered into at Washington for the cancellation of the external debt, under which the British bondholders agreed to accept

£452,000 as the value of the debt, with cumulative interest at 8.86 per cent during the period of amortization, while the Honduranian Government agreed to pay, during the next thirty years, a total of £1,200,000.

Honduras also had an internal debt of some £618,000, which has been increased by recent revolutions and other disturbances. The payments on the consolidated foreign loan, which have been made regularly since 1925, are partly secured by the country's consular invoices, the stamps for which are issued only by the National City Bank of New York, under an agreement made at the time of the consolidation between Honduras and the foreign bondholders.

The country's biggest industry is banana-growing. It is all done on the east coast and by foreigners—the United Fruit and several more or less independent companies—and this foreign management, modern methods, fast ships, sanitation, and the large scale and efficiency of the operations have made the banana belt, here as elsewhere on the east coast, almost a separate country.

The United Fruit Company's relations with the government of Honduras have been less amicable than with some of the other governments, and laws have been passed prohibiting the importation of Jamaican labor. Something like 20,000,000 bunches of bananas are exported from Honduras, and as the exporters pay 1½ cents export duty on each bunch, the income from this source is considerable. A feeling, probably inevitable in the circumstances, even were the export tax higher, nevertheless exists that Honduras gets too little out of the wealth which comes from its soil.

Next to bananas, silver is the most important ex-

port, and here again Americans are largely in control. The New York and Honduras Rosario Mining Company, at San Juancito, up in the hills from Tegucigalpa, managed by Americans although some of the stock is still held by the Honduranian family which originally owned the mine, is the only group which operates on a large scale. It produced in 1926, for instance, $1,601,-422.83 worth of silver and gold, and a similar amount has been yielded by its mines for many years. Dynamite and other freight marked "Rosario" is one of the commonest sights on the Amapala-Tegucigalpa road, and its silver ingots make up nearly 25 per cent of the total exports of Honduras. Here again, the country itself gets comparatively little of the wealth taken out of its soil, except in the indirect forms of wages paid to mine-laborers and of the mountain-road which the company had to build in order to get its own freight in and out.

Honduras is perhaps better suited for cattle-raising than any of the republics. It used to ship a good many cattle to Cuba, but this market fell off after Cuban independence. No attempt is made to pack beef for shipment, but there are sizable exports both of live cattle and of hides.

The comparative lack of good coffee country has been a drawback, from several points of view. Coffee means not only money taken out of the soil but much put back into it. It means fine estates, comfortable homes, and citizens with roots. It is not like mining, which contributes little in the way of permanent social capital to any neighborhood, and thus far, at least, it has not been industrialized, as has the banana business. It is like any other farming or fruit-growing. Some coffee is

grown in the department of Santa Barbara in the northwestern mountains, but in trifling amounts compared with the coffee crops in the other republics.

Good tobacco grows in Honduras, in the Copan country, and it is used for cigarettes both in Honduras and in Guatemala and Salvador. You can also realize in Honduras the dream of the late Vice-President Marshall—a good five-cent cigar. They could, of course, produce good five-cent cigars in Cuba, but the Cubans, apparently, are too proud. You will find expensive cigars much cheaper in Havana than in New York, but between these and the inferior stogies thrown together for sailors and longshoremen there seems to be nothing. The Hondureños are less sophisticated in such matters, and the ordinary unlabelled cigars sold in the plaza in Tegucigalpa are good enough for anybody.

In spite of the country's lack of development, and the fact that there would appear to be room enough for everybody, the Mexican land-reforms had had their echo here, and I found the president, Doctor Paz-Baraona, interested in a sort of homesteading scheme for developing idle lands along the eastern slope and also in the highlands. Most of those with whom I talked did not expect much from any such measures. They doubted that ignorant peasants, without capital or any one to direct them, would be able to go into the primeval forest and make a living from twenty hectares of land, or have much appetite for trying it, but it was interesting, at any rate, to find a president conscious of his responsibilities in such matters and trying to avoid a land problem by taking measures to prevent it.

A physician by profession, and a quiet and agreeable gentleman, Doctor Paz had little taste, one gathered, for the hard-boiled methods of the traditional Central American dictator. A compromise candidate who owed his position, in part at least, to the intervention of the United States, after the fighting between the several factions in 1923 and 1924, Doctor Paz welcomed rather than feared American influence, and he was frankly grateful for the moral support he had received from the American minister, Mr. Summerlin. Unless one is a tough-fisted dictator, being president in a country like Honduras, with little money in the treasury, hungry neighbors on every side, and a filibuster of his own people—the Indian, Ferrera—waiting across the border in Guatemala for a chance to make trouble, cannot be a great deal of fun. Doctor Paz told me that when his term expired in 1929 he should feel that he had had quite enough.

The all-but-empty little "palace," with a single servant receiving visitors in the lower hall and running up-stairs to announce them to the president; the brown, barefoot petitioner waiting in the anteroom with me—were quite in the key of this very simple, remote, and rather lonely little mountain capital.

There are movies, of course, in Tegucigalpa, and a Spanish theatrical troupe was playing while I was in town; and every night its leading lady, who was also its manager, thriftily counted over, coin by coin, the money taken in that evening before she went to bed. I say she did this, because, before I was able to change my room, she had the room adjoining mine, and, as the partition went only part way to the lofty ceiling, she used to keep me awake while doing it.

IV

But the real show place for visitors to Tegucigalpa, if they have two or three days to spare for the trip, is the San Rosario mine, eighteen or twenty miles uphill into the mountains. It is a place you hear echoes of all over Honduras. Every free-lance engineer or mechanic you meet is likely to have been employed there at one time or another, and every other train of pack-mules you pass on the Amapala road or cluster of bullock-carts taking it easy under the trees during the heat of the day, after their all-night's slow creaking up the trail, is likely to be carrying boxes bearing the stamp of "El Rosario."

The ride up to the mine is well worth taking for its own sake—up above the Tegucigalpa roofs, over the hills, and into the pines, and then, finally, above this rather arid plateau zone, which reminds one of parts of Arizona or Idaho, you enter one of those curious high-level belts of enormous trees and tropical vegetation. The excess of moisture here on the summit counterbalances, apparently, the usual effects of altitude, and you might fancy yourself three or four thousand feet lower down.

Great columnar trunks, with lianas hanging from their tops like the cables from skyscraper derricks at home, rise from the mountainside that shoots up almost vertically from the trail, and, what with the height of the bank itself and the height of the trees, spread their dark umbrellas of shade two or three hundred feet above. The road will skirt a green canyon, the growth so thick that the near side is invisible beyond a few feet, while across the chasm the eye runs down a

dark-green wall so opaque, so dizzily dropping down, down, into almost blackness, that one is reminded of the way in which the bottom drops down sheer into the sea-green depths off some volcanic island.

We have no such effects of verdure in the pale North. Something in the luxuriance of the growth itself, something in the fierce sunlight, with its knife-edge contrasts of high light and ink-black shadow, combine to give a body, a darkly foaming depth, compared with which our oaks and elms and maples are but mere speckles on the earth's face. The difference between looking at one of our mountainsides and looking across at the farther wall of one of these Honduranian valleys is the difference between looking at a bit of cotton cloth, let us say, and looking into deep plush or velvet. The trees themselves, when you are close under them, have quite different personalities. They are not something designed, so to speak, in the same scale as man and subdued to his uses. They are not something for children to climb about in, and to hang their swings under; they do not rustle confidingly or wave their branches eloquently to every passing breeze. They tower like mountains themselves, designed for a world in which man is himself subdued and reduced to the scale of the smaller animals and insects.

And there is a peculiar personality, moreover, in these high-level forests, entering them, as one does, after leaving the tropical jungles far below and passing through the sparse vegetation of the dry pine zone. They exhale an air of something chastened and superior, cloistered and remote. The air is clearer, the sunlight seems to have a special radiance; all about you can hear birds singing, although you rarely see them,

their voices liquid in this shadowy, ultramundane world where there are neither towns nor people—it is like some old-fashioned notion of a Garden of Eden.

Well, you and your mule poke along, seemingly far from man, when suddenly the road climbs over the divide and you come out in the clear, looking down on a huge, wide valley, with a silver thread of river winding through it, possibly two or thousand feet below. Presently you are aware of a rumbling, like that of distant trains rolling over a bridge, and there, below you, pasted to the mountainside, are gray buildings—houses, crushers, cyanide tanks—of the Rosario mine

Certainly it is one of the most splendid sites imaginable. And here, after some forty years of work and polishing, are all, or at any rate a good many, of the things to make men forget that they are exiled at the end of a trail, a thousand miles from nowhere. The houses of the manager and the upper officers are like officers' quarters at an army post—everything to make one comfortable, from bridge-sets and cocktail-shakers to shaded electric lamps and the new magazines. Eucalyptus-trees, planted long ago, now rise above them on what was once the bare hillside, and the ground has been terraced into gardens for lettuce and peas and strawberries. On the very edge of the height, looking out over that magnificent valley, is the club-house where the American personnel have their commons, lounge and fireplace, Victrola, and a really extraordinary library.

From the veranda in the early mornings, you look down on a floor of cloud, with the faraway valley showing underneath its edges. In the late afternoons, during the rainy-season time in which I visited El Rosario, one

can see half a dozen different storms going at once, in different parts of that fifty or seventy-five mile valley, with the sun shining blandly between. There is not a sound, and the distances are so great that the long, trailing skirts of mist, dropping from sky to earth, seem to hang motionless, and it is only when one looks intently that one can sometimes see a white gash of trail or a ploughed countryside, miles below, turn black as the rain brushes slowly across it. At sundown a breathless hush hovers over all that vast expanse. Microscopic donkey-trains crawl along the mountain face far below; in the nearer distance dots of peasant women, followed by their littler dots of children, come trudging homeward with water-jars on their heads. From somewhere down below ascends a snatch of song or the faint tinkle of bells. Then darkness, and the vast flat trough begins to be speckled with lights.

What with the isolation and the view, the mill to see, horses to ride, and a large variety or more or less strong-and-silent, and lonesome, young engineers on which to practise, El Rosario is a very attractive place for occasional young-lady visitors from the States. As we sat playing bridge in the lounge that evening, an elderly misanthrope, scowling across the room toward the fireplace before which the new school-teacher sat, surrounded by her court, growled that no women should be allowed to come to the mine who were not at least forty and ugly.

In 1913, on the Puerto Barrios-New Orleans boat, was a young lady, far from forty and not at all ugly, who had just been visiting El Rosario and seemed vastly taken with the place. Our trails parted at New Orleans, but as I climbed off my mule this time on

reaching the mine they met again, and it was she who greeted me and invited me to tea—as the manager's wife!

V

Tegucigalpa had changed less in that interval than some of the other capitals. The coast is only a few hours, instead of days, away, as already explained; there is a brand-new wireless station, presented by the great and good friend of all the Central American states, Mexico; and, instead of what used to be called *vibraciones del cable* and were scarcely more than a sort of official communiqué, the little newspapers nowadays print a good deal of real news. But some of the signs of progress were a little open to doubt, the new business block, for example, building on one side of the central plaza. The old Tegucigalpa buildings were all of a kind—fortress-like structures, in the Spanish colonial style, of but one story generally, severe and simple, but with a solid dignity and good of their kind. What the reformers were doing, consciously or not, but with great pains and expense, was to reproduce the sort of three-story brick block with a galvanized-iron cornice which used to be admired in the American Middle-Western small town in the seventies and eighties, so that one could look forward to, let us say, a Tegucigalpa of 1950, which instead of taking one back to some hill town of Italy or Spain might be another Bird Center or Hickory Creek.

I find, in my diary of that earlier day, the arrival of a new diplomat—always an exciting social event in such a capital—reported in some detail. There was the long

train of cargo-mules that brought the luggage, and possibly the furniture, and undoubtedly some of the wine, of the great man and his secretary. Then, as soon as he could present his credentials and get settled in the legation, there was a formal reception, with a band serenading in the street below the legation windows, and the president and his ministers arriving to greet the new envoy.

During this solemn rite the guests sat in a semicircle, champagne-glasses in hand, and the minister's lady, if he had one, smiled a "*Salud!*" and raised her glass. "*Salud!*" murmured the guests, and she swung her glass from left to right and, after a decorous pause, from right to left, and so on, depending on how much the new minister thought he could afford to spend on champagne. The guests shook hands with the new diplomat, gave their felicitations, and filed out. The band, inspired by this time by humbler liquids served in the legation patio below, again took up its place beneath the street balcony and played "The Dollar Princess" and "Encanto de Valse" and finally the Honduranian national anthem. Then they marched away, the new minister counted up his bottles, lights went out, and the capital was still but for the sentry challenging from the box on the cuartel wall and the hourly clanging of the cathedral bells.

High tea at the legation on Sunday afternoon was another but less formal rite, and participated in by some of the native ladies as well as by diplomats and foreign colonists. Again the guests sat in a semicircle, *Mamá* exchanging courtesies with the minister and his wife, Mercedes and Eléna still as mice, or possibly risking a breathless word or two with the legation secre-

tary drifting exquisitely in with his handkerchief in his cuff and that air of professional courtesy masking an inner ennui peculiar to his kind. *Mamá* would not touch her tea until her hostess had sipped hers, and sometimes the latter had to lift her cup each time, ere the guests, smiling like graven images, promptly lifted theirs.

Then some one would suggest that Mercedita play. Her two or three pieces, pounded out on an ancient piano behind closed shutters through many a quiet Tegucigalpa morning, were known to everybody, but nobody said so, of course, and Mercedita, powdered like a happy marshmallow, would then turn the "Hungarian Rhapsodie" into a slow sort of Spanish dance, pound out a Mexican waltz with melancholy, minor slants, and then the national hymn, melancholy also but with a cry of bugles in it, and then resume her seat in the semicircle, rolling her great eyes round with her slow, rather breathless smile. Then the whole family rose like a piece of clockwork, each in turn murmured the same formal phrases, and the party was done.

In the yellowed copies of several newspapers of that day I find mention of "el picnic de Señor Stuart," of some pictures recently received by El Progresso Labor Society from a correspondent in Salvador, "showing, in ascending scale, the ravages of the alcohol habit," and of a ball in honor of President Bertrand at the town of Danli, at which the guests "danced on, heedless of the flight of time, amidst the enchanting murmur and rustle of the lovely perfumed flowers (*i. e.*, young ladies) of Danli."

There is a short story, a translation from the En-

glish of Samuel Smiles, and letter to the editor on the subject of the ideal:

> In these acrid realities in which we are daily immersed, what would we be without it? . . . The picture, statue, monument, music, philosophical essay, moral action, are like steps that ascend to it, firm in the midst of the indecisions of life and the constant fluctuations of time, shining over errors like the sun above the clouds. A society without ideals is a madhouse, a menagerie of tigers. . . .

The editor of one of the papers then was Señor Froylan Turcios, who had written several books about his native province of Olancho, as well as a novel called "Annabel Lee." The novel was still unpublished, but during a pleasant chat on things in general, including the poetry of Walt Whitman, which Señor Turcios greatly admired, he gave me several of his works and an introduction—already published—to the unpublished novel, in which a friend of his, writing from Paris, thus described him:

> The poet is of medium stature, sombre without being dark, like the Moors of Teneriffe; agile, with a certain feline agility, with limbs perfectly proportioned; high forehead, chestnut hair, concave brow under wavy hair, suggesting a convenient roosting-place for the birds of thought; brown eyes, lost in the distances of dreams or wrapped in the mists of meditation; a firm, small nose, giving the key to an anti-sexual temperament, did not the amorous lips speak to the contrary; slender waist, restless gait, hands and feet small, the manner violent or suave, according to circumstances? Such is the man. . . . Perhaps his life might have been happier in a richer, more aromatic world, but in default of that he has set about to make a world of his own, building little by little on the azure plateau of his spirit a palace of faith, love, and dreams. . . .

All day long, then, the quiet air of the capital was split with bugle-calls, and files of stolid little Indian

soldiers, looking extremely lonesome and unhappy, went scuffling through the streets on practice marches. Return to one's hotel after nine or ten at night, one would be brought up standing by a sharp challenge from the cuartel wall.

"*Patria!*" one was expected to call back. "Who is it?" "*Americano!*"—and one was permitted to proceed.

After loud whacking on the spike-studded outer door of the little hotel one was admitted through the arched passageway, into the inner patio, on the centre cobblestones of which our big sheep generally lay sleeping. This wise and complacent animal had been born in the patio, it was said, and, except now and then to poke his nose into the street, had spent his life there. He had the run of the ground-floor rooms, and wandered in and out, nibbling whatever struck his fancy. When he slept the hotel dog generally huddled up against his thick wool. One night some one came home very late and banged the knocker for a long time without awaking the porter. I was about to go down myself when the old sheep, feeling evidently that something ought to be done, began to "Ba-a!" and the porter promptly let the man in.

People and animals lived closely together then, all over Honduras, and still do, though not quite so much so nowadays, and, as most journeys were made on horse or mule back, the condition of one's *bestias*, what one was feeding them, where was the best place for *huato* (the long coarse grass, known as *sacate* across the border), and so on, were staples of every-day talk. Except for an occasional measure of corn the native's animals rarely get grain, and hay is scarce; they do their work on green feed the year round. It is brought into

town in big sheaves, one on each side of a mule and all but burying him. The mules are not, of course, our Missouri variety, but sleek little zebra-like animals. The gait of the good ones, a sort of running walk, is as easy as a rocking-chair, their willingness never-ending, and the distance they can cover under a tropical sun astonishing.

Tegucigalpa was so much farther from the world in those pre-war days that the stranger who found congenial friends soon felt as snug as on a ship, and he left it with the vague pang bestowed on those places which one feels one will never see again. I gather that the gringo I know best could scarcely point his mule's head toward the Pacific when he pattered out of Tegucigalpa in the dark one morning in the summer of 1913.

He had spent the evening before with a Honduranian family, singing round the piano, and just as the last good-bys were being said one of the lovely daughters had suddenly pulled a gardenia out of a vase and pinned it on his coat. Through the dark, a few hours later, had come a clatter of hoofs and the *arriero's* muffled voice through the window-shutters—"*Patrón! Patrón! Son las tres!*"—three o'clock! Then coffee by candle-light, and away through the sleeping-town. At the fort on the outskirts the sad little soldiers were already up, their officers muffled up in military cloaks, and were counting sleepily—*uno . . . dos . . . tres . . .* down the files. Their voices fell behind and were swallowed up in the morning fog.

The sun suddenly hit the peaks and it grew light. A fresh morning wind blew down from the heights, and with it, as the sentimental traveller reached in the pocket of his flannel shirt for something to smoke, came

the faint, languorous smell of a gardenia, thrust there in the last hurry of packing, along with matches and what was left of a yesterday's cigar. The capital was almost underneath now, as the trail swung round above it, the sun just striking the yellow face of the little cathedral. There was the legation flagstaff, and the patio where the old sheep slept, and the roof under which the good-bys had been said the night before. After all, why not go back? . . . And jabbing the blameless mule in the ribs, he trotted over the divide and down-trail toward the sea.

Nothing like that this time. Motor-cars were roaring all over the place long before we got away for San Lorenzo, again with the Nicaraguan and his awful wife. We shot through Sabana Grande and Perspiré without stopping, and would have been in San Lorenzo in three hours had not an impassable ford—a characteristic rainy-season inconvenience—held us up a few miles outside it. The bridge was under repair and unusable, and it was an example of the government's scanty resources that the repairs, which half a dozen men could have made in a few days, had for several weeks been dragging along half-heartedly, for lack of funds, on this only motor highway from the Pacific up to the capital!

Amapala and the green cone of Tigre looked more velvety than ever, as the San Lorenzo launch came over the quiet bay, and this time I took a room in the Hotel Venetia on the wharf. The Venetia consisted of a row of bedrooms, somewhat after the fashion of bath-houses, with partitions rising only part-way to the roof, and its resemblance to Venice lay in the fact that salt water slapped the piles underneath it. But it was cool

ONE OF THE DROWSY LITTLE TOWNS OF THE HONDUREÑAN HIGHLANDS.

THE PATIO WHERE THE OLD SHEEP SLEPT IN THE INN AT TEGUCIGALPA.
The *mestizo* maid is shaking fréshly roasted coffee.

and breezy, snug enough when the tropical deluge drummed down that afternoon on its corrugated-iron roof, and it had this advantage over its neighbors on solid ground—that all its somewhat sketchy chambermaids had to do to put it to right in the morning was to throw back the sheets on the cot and sweep cigar-butts, beer-bottle corks, and other relics of the last occupants into—as Conrad would say—the vast and incorruptible sea.

Amapala was not a place most people would care to be marooned in permanently, but with its German and French steamship agents—men who had fought on opposite fronts—now working in adjoining offices, British and American steamship officers, and natives of various sorts of crisscrossed blood, all huddled along a shaded strip of beach underneath what had once been an active volcano, it made up a microcosm quite amusing enough for a night and a day.

It was still dark when the bugle from the guard-house at the beach-end split the tepid silence over and over again, and by the time the sun had crept part-way down the green slopes of Tigre life was well under way. Dugouts with fruit and vegetables began to arrive from the near-by islands, and out in the roadstead the steamer's whistle flung its exotic note of hurry and insistence into the drowsy, hothouse air.

One look up at Tigre, as coffee and the brightening morning awoke one's ambition, and thought how pleasant it would be to climb to the top of that graciously sloping cone and look down on all this island world and the bay in which, were war in the Pacific ever to come, our navy might concentrate part of its fleet.

But the launch for La Union, Salvador's eastern

port, was always on the point of starting, and about the best one could do was to loll in a hammock and take it out in looking. Similarly killing time was another American, who was travelling as a drummer, but whose talk and disregard of steamship schedules suggested that he might be engaged on some more diplomatic mission. He tossed over to me Davis's "Captain Macklin," laid, as you may recall, in Honduras, with one of its most theatrical scenes in this very port of Amapala. And it was a curious sensation enough to be lolling there in a hammock on the Amapala wharf of to-day and to run over pages written so recently that even I could remember when they first appeared in *Scribner's Magazine* and yet which now, in a generation that has learned what war really means, let alone its notions of "imperialism," "rights of small nations," etc., seemed to come from another age.

Macklin, as you may recall, after wearing his lady's bracelet through a campaign in Honduras which had made him ruler for a day, came back to Dobb's Ferry to the most beautiful woman in the world (all women were good and beautiful, he believed; she was only the best and most beautiful) and tried for a few days to settle down and fit his life to hers. Then, at the crucial moment, in came a cable from Marseilles, offering him a commission with some French zouaves just departing on an expedition to Tonkin. Strong young man though he was, the words nevertheless left him "trembling and cold":

> . . . Beyond the slight, white figure with its crown of burnished copper, I saw the swarming harbor of Marseilles. I saw the swaggering Turcos in their scarlet breeches, the crowded troop-ships, and from every ship's mast the glorious tricolor of

France; the flag that in ten short years had again risen, that was flying over advancing columns in China, in Africa, in Madagascar, over armies that for Alsace-Lorraine were giving France new and great colonies in every seaboard of the world. The thoughts that flew through my brain made my fingers clench until the nails bit into my palms. Even to dream of such happiness was actual pain. . . .

. . . I wanted to see the shells splash up the earth again. . . . I wanted the kiss and caress of danger, the joy that comes when the sword wins honor and victory together. I wanted the clean, clear view of right and wrong that is given only to those who walk hourly with death. . . .

It was mid-afternoon before the launch got away for Salvador, and by that time I was peacefully asleep, and, awakened only by the merest chance, galloped down the wharf leaving an only rain-coat hanging on the Venetia's wall. Again the Nicaraguan's wife, like some fury of old, perched on our shoulders, but the ride across the bay was still and lovely; Amapala and Tigre dropped out of sight, and there rose before us the skyline of El Salvador and the still nobler cone of San Miguel.

BUSY SALVADOR

CHAPTER VI

BUSY SALVADOR

I

El Salvador is the smallest, the most thickly populated, and the hardest-working of all the Central American republics. It is only about one-third as large as Costa Rica, and it has nearly three times as many people. Indeed, with something like 225 inhabitants to every square mile it is one of the comparatively crowded neighborhoods of the world.

Luckily, nearly all of its land can be cultivated and fields often run clear up to the mountain-tops. Taken as a whole, it is not so "white" as Costa Rica's Meseta Central nor so "Indian" as the much larger neighboring state of Guatemala. It is the only one of the five republics which has no coast on the Atlantic and no banana belt with its accompanying negroes. Its ruling class is, generally speaking, white, as in each of the other republics, but the mass of its people are a comparatively even mixture of white and native Indian, as in Honduras and Nicaragua.

This mass is less "democratic" than the corresponding class in Costa Rica, in the sense that it is less politically conscious, has fewer landowners, and is less touchy about hours of labor and kinds of work. A former president of the republic remarked to me with a somewhat amused smile that the Costa Rican peasants were very "*señorizados*"—that is to say, "misterized." While visiting in Costa Rica he had ventured to address a bag-

gage-porter by the familiar "thou." The porter informed him promptly that he was not "*tu*" but "*usted*"!

At the same time the stranger feels in Salvador (I venture to drop the orthodox "El") a certain grown-up and settled atmosphere that reminds him somewhat of the other country. Salvador has grown out of the habit of revolutions almost as successfully as has Costa Rica. The army is bigger and better trained—indeed, it is the best in Central America—and it is supplemented by a smartly dressed and efficient constabulary. There is more of a military air altogether, so that the orderliness seems a bit more imposed and a bit less spontaneous, but it is at any rate a fact. The upper class is accustomed to travel abroad, it has introduced foreign manners and customs, and its young people go to school and college in the United States more often than not. At a sugar-plantation near San Salvador which I visited one day they had been having a party the afternoon before, and my host told me that, of the fifteen or twenty young ladies present, practically all had been "finished" at American boarding-schools. In short, but for certain nuances of difference, and the fact that Salvador, shut off as it has been on the Pacific side, has always been farther away from the United States than Costa Rica, and has had fewer American colonists, there seems little reason why an American shouldn't as naturally apply the "nice little" to the one country as the other.

Although Salvador has no outlet on the Atlantic, the nearness of all parts of the country to the Pacific have simplified its problems of transportation. There is an east-and-west railroad service clear across the country, from the port of La Union to the capital San Salvador,

by the International Railways of Central America, and from the capital on to the western port of Acajutla by the Salvador Railway Company. The latter also gives what might roughly be called a north-and-south service from Acajutla through the capital to the second city, Santa Ana, near the northwestern border. The International Railways also has a line running from the capital to Santa Ana and is now continuing this line through to the Guatemalan town of Zacapa. When this line is finished—it will doubtless absorb, in time, the English-owned Salvador Railway line which it parallels—there will be through railway service, by way of Guatemala, to the Caribbean port of Puerto Barrios and also to Mexico. A motor highway connects the capital with the port of La Libertad, a short run of twenty-five or thirty miles over the coastal range of mountains, and a good deal of freight now comes this way by motor-truck. There is also good motor service between Santa Ana and Guatemala City.

II

The fact that a personal letter from President Paz-Baraona had slid me through the Amapala customs without being written down on the passenger-list at once made me a suspicious person in La Union, and it was only after much sweating and wrangling, that recalled the frontiers of the new little republics of eastern Europe in 1919 and 1920, that I finally emerged in tow of Baggage Porter Number 4, an amiable old fellow who promised to tap on my window at four A. M. next morning in time for the up-country train and declined to take any pay until the whole job was done.

There was swimming of sorts, in the muddy warm

harbor water, off the little "Hotel Europe," provided one didn't touch bottom and the corals, or whatever they were, that cut like razors; dinner in the patio, with warm beer; and an evening's gossip on the sidewalk with an ex-Rosario miner, the husband of the Nicaraguan harpy—still with us—and a rather comely *mestiza*, who had a little boy with her and much experience with men. She had lived with several, she said, simply. The papá of the little boy was not the one she was living with now. On the whole, she preferred Americans. They were more *delicado* than the natives and didn't beat one so readily, and she had a specially soft spot for Mr. X. of the Fruit Company—very likely we knew him?—who was a perfect gentleman in every way. She was on her way from Honduras to San Salvador now, in connection with a small importing business in which she was also interested.

Number 4 turned up, sure enough, before daybreak, carried four heavy pieces of luggage on his head and otherwise suspended, half a mile or more, and was so much pleased with 75 cents for his two days' work that he thanked his *patrón* profusely and begged him to remember the number if ever he visited La Union again. With the spread of automobiles and taxis in Central America the old-fashioned *cargador* will doubtless soon be an extinct species. The strength, speed, and shine of the motor-car endow the undeveloped human with a vicarious power and shoddy insolence no less in the tropics than in other zones. I could not but compare Number 4, sadly, with the gang of chauffeurs and their satellites who swarmed into the train at San Salvador station late that day, grabbed one's luggage without so much as a by-your-leave, hustled it into an automobile,

clambered on the running-board, and dashed thus to the hotel, prepared to howl and make a fight of it, whatever the lawful tariff, in the fashion of the most sophisticated Manhattan or Chicago gunmen.

It is a rich, beautiful, and industriously cultivated country through which the train climbs between La Union and the capital. There is sugar-cane and corn on the lower levels, and far up the mountainsides, just under the heavy layers of rainy-season clouds that occasionally sag down over them, one can see, every now and then, the microscopic roof of some far-off coffee finca.

To the southward, during most of the all-day's ride, the country dropped into a foggy heat shimmer that hid the Pacific, and down there was cattle country and the *Costa del Balsamo*, where the so-called Peruvian balsam comes from. This resin, used in making perfumery, comes from a tree, indigenous here, and supposed to have been called balsam of Peru because, in colonial times, the balsam went first to Callao for shipment to Europe.

Along the railway-line, on slopes so steep that machine-seeders could not be used, probably, even if the farmers had them, oxen slowly dragged ploughs, behind which tramped a man with a bag of corn, who dropped a few kernels every few feet and covered and tamped them down with his bare foot. Familiar American makes of motor-cars gave a curiously suburban air to many of the remote mountain stations. The train crossed the Lemba, largest of Central American rivers on the Pacific side; passed a great field of black-lava rock which poured out of the volcano of San Salvador a few years ago and down for several miles to the very

edge of the railway embankment; skirted many curious chasms or crevasses, so to say, in the soft volcanic earth, the ridges between which were cut with well-beaten paths and covered with plots of corn, sugar, and coffee; and finally, after swinging round the beautiful mountain lake of Lopopango, rolled down-hill and into the capital.

On the train, and at the stations along the way, the stranger is struck by the constabulary, or *Guardia Nacional*—smart and soldierlike young men, in pith helmets and Sam Browne belts, peculiar to Salvador. They seem to have much of that esprit de corps which characterizes extra-municipal police elsewhere, and even the president is said to be a bit careful of too brusquely opposing them. An American lady living in the capital, who had requested the authorities to send special watchmen for her villa during a burglar scare, said that the difference between the *Guardia Nacional* and the regular capital policemen was that the former stayed awake and read, while the latter, after carefully taking off coats, belts, pistols, cartridges, and night-stick, and wrapping their heads in towels, lay down under a tree in her garden and snored so loudly that they kept her awake all night.

San Salvador is a bit lower than most of the other Central American mountain capitals, but its two thousand or so feet of altitude are enough to give it clear airs and a pleasant climate. Indeed, I got the notion that there was a special radiance and dazzle about the place, and as one strolled into it, after the cool morning shower-bath and leisurely coffee, with the limpid blue overhead and the green mountains all about, and the springlike air that caressed without cloying, it seemed

LOOKING DOWN ON SAN SALVADOR, THE HIGHLAND CAPITAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF EL SALVADOR.

THE WELL-TURNED OUT AND EFFICIENT GUARDIA NACIONAL, A SORT OF STATE CONSTABULARY, OF EL SALVADOR.

that people born and brought up in such surroundings ought to have a special sensitiveness to physical beauty, that the external radiance ought to produce radiant thoughts and a superior sort of civilization sprout in such a scene some day, and Salvador produce something more than coffee.

In the impression which the capital makes on the traveller one cannot omit the new and very perfect asphalt pavements, in which, with the help of American engineer-contractors and engineers, she had lately dressed herself. At home a bit of asphalt a bit of asphalt is, and nothing more; but in a part of the world where material improvements are slight and it is not only easy but sometimes seems almost in the nature of things to be slatternly, such things may take on an unexpected significance.

It is a not uncommon thing, in Central American cities, to have to climb down and climb up a two or three foot gap between sidewalk and pavement or lack of pavement, every time you cross a street. This disagreeable arrangement is not due to innate sloppiness on the part of the inhabitants, but to the fact that during the torrential downpours of the rainy season a street may be converted in a few minutes into a knee-deep river. So rough are these sudden freshets that storm-sewers and asphalt are generally assumed to be impracticable; streets are paved with cobbles, and rain left to run off as best it may.

San Salvador's new streets—and they had done the same thing in the near-by port of La Libertad, and were about to do it in Santa Ana—had not only storm-sewers, but subsurface conduits for telephone and electric-light wires. They were made almost flush with the

sidewalks, so that when traffic was light the whole of the narrow space between the houses might be used for a footpath; in short, they were as good as the streets in any city in the world.

The difference which all this makes in cleanliness and ease of getting about is more than the Northerner would think. All at once you discover that various things generally assumed to be congenital to the tropics —smells, dust or mud, discomfort—do not necessarily belong there at all, and that a town can look as brisk and shipshape in Central America as in southern California.

I was specially struck with this "psychology" of good roads as we blew out to the beautiful country club on the outskirts of the capital. Ox-carts, pack-mules, peasants with burdens on their heads, all the usual furniture of the tropical scene, flowed by us like pictures out of another century. Lolling back in a good car, on a first-class motor-highway, we were temperamentally speaking, in Long Island, the Berkshires, southern California, or where you will—anywhere but a place in which it was somehow necessary to be indolent or unambitious. We hurried out the five or six miles in ten or fifteen minutes, got into our clothes and to playing, just as briskly as any exercise-cranks would have done at home.

The view from the terrace of the club is beautiful enough, with the green cone of San Salvador rising high on the left, other mountains to the right, coffee-plantations all about, and down below the white walls of the town. While we were playing the syncopated clatter of a marimba orchestra came throbbing down the fairway, and when we got back people were taking tea and dancing and chattering in various languages on this

flagged, open-air terrace. Here again one was a world away from the "classical" Central America of fevers, fleas, beach-combers, despots, and defaulting cashiers.

Now it may be pointed out that only a handful of the inhabitants enjoy the peculiar psychology of roads of which I have spoken, inasmuch as most of them still go on mules or afoot; that fewer still play golf or invite their souls on country-club terraces; and that the pavements of the capital, in a land where most workers receive less than half a dollar a day and schools still leave much to be desired, is only another characteristic Central American example of providing luxuries for the few at the expense of the many.

The point is obvious enough, but leaves out of account certain local imponderables. A low standard of living being so easy and plausible in the tropics, such things as San Salvador's pavements stood out, not only as an example to the Salvadoreños but to all their neighbors. It is possible, in such surroundings, for asphalt to acquire almost a kind of spiritual significance, to become a symbol, like the Englishman's dinner-jacket, of a certain self-restraint and self-respect, and loyalty to standards of living not yet reached in the surroundings. I found it hard, even, to work up any very vigorous crusading enthusiasm over the obviously disproportionate luxury of the San Salvador Country Club, and very easy, on the spot, to regard it as a sort of shrine to the pagan gods of sport and health—not to speak of more social manners—too little worshipped in the Spanish tropics.

III

With its clean streets, traffic policemen standing under big umbrellas at the main corners; several well-appointed clubs, where you will find all the foreign papers; its busy university on the main plaza, and the neatly uniformed and attractive young schoolgirls a frequent sight in the quieter streets; at least one hotel modern and elaborate enough to satisfy the weekly batches of tourists; its comparatively newsy papers; motor-buses running to and from the near-by villages, and its general air of busyness, San Salvador seems grown-up enough.

Not quite enough, however, to get away, in its press at least, from the old-fashioned journalistic stencils about the northern Colossus and his nefarious works. The echoes of the American intervention in Nicaragua were just resounding through the Isthmus when I arrived in the capital, and several Salvadoreño volunteers who had been fighting with General Moncada's forces against the "traitors of the land of lakes" had returned the day before.

> All these young patriots [said the *Diario de la Prensa*] come back unharmed. The traitors' bullets respected their noble breasts, in which the love of Central American liberty burns like a candle on the most beautiful altar.
>
> Many Salvadoreños fought with General Moncada, and all escaped with their lives, with the exception of Arturo Salinas, of Santa Ana, who fell gloriously on the field of battle, enveloped in the blue-and-white flag of the fatherland. . . .

When I speak of "stencils" I do not refer to such notes as the above so much as to the absurdly romanticized and flatly untrue accounts of alleged happenings

in Nicaragua which appeared almost daily in papers the editors of which, when one met them personally, talked quite sensibly and objectively of the United States and its inter-American relations.

Here is a characteristic bit about the death of the Nicaraguan chieftain known as "Cabuya," who was killed in one of the suburbs of Chinandega.

Captain Richardson is one of the North Americans who are occupying Chinandega, in support of the power of Señor Diaz, the man who sold his country. As already explained, Cabuya was greatly feared by the Yankees, who thought he might force his way into Managua and destroy their protectorate.

Richardson, more than all, felt a profound dread whenever General Cabuya was mentioned. This barefoot man, powerful, frank, fierce, made his flesh creep. . . . It was necessary to finish with him. He went out to hunt him, as if after tigers.

The lion was sleeping, the day of his death, in his own home. With him was his sweetheart, a beautiful young woman of Chinandega, with whom all the most valiant leaders were madly in love. . . .

Captain Richardson and a soldier entered the patio, drove out the others, and carefully opened the door. Like wild animals after their prey, the "khakis" leaped at the bed where the brave general was peacefully sleeping. . . . Red blood dyed the bed, and the giant, nightmare of the North Americans, did not rise again. The woman, mad with anguish to see her lover wounded, sank to her knees and begged the blond [intruders] for his life, but the soldier who accompanied Richardson plunged his bayonet into the unfortunate's body, transfixing her. . . . The poor woman took a step or two, threw her arms into the air as if seeking the soul of the famous chieftain, and then fell bathed with blood.

The cowardly assassins fled to Chinandega before the inhabitants were aware of what had happened. They have not been punished. And they will not be. No one will punish them, for the Nicaraguan people, which is the only one which should avenge the killing of its brothers, is disarmed, with the iron heel of the United States planted on its bleeding corpse. . . .

One read such rigmaroles and then went to call on editors who turned out to be courteous and practical gentlemen, who talked quite sensibly of the special responsibility which the United States inevitably has toward the republics adjacent to the Panama Canal,—however they might object to President Diaz or to various examples of Yankee bumptiousness,—who used American press services, filled their Sunday papers with syndicated American cartoons and "boiler-plate," and, in general, seemed to welcome closer relations with their American colleagues.

Such stories seem to be a sort of convention, a manner of speaking, like the newspaper yarns which all nations print about each other in war-time. And of course, as long as we are intervening forcibly in the affairs of the Central American republics, something like war-time conditions and war-time psychology inevitably exists.

When I visited San Salvador in 1913 the repercussions of the Bryan "protectorate" over Nicaragua were filling the press, and, apropos of the celebration of the anniversary of independence from Spain then preparing, the *Diario del Salvador* lamented the money and energy about to be wasted in "flag-waving, alcohol, and gluttony" when——

> We ought to be making Puritans of ourselves, taking bitter bread and water like the legendary men of the desert, fortifying ourselves for great spiritual struggles. . . . The only dance we ought to permit ourselves is the dance of passionate enthusiasm at the foot of our flag to the sound of our autochthonal bands and battle-hymns. . . . Is there any remedy for the evils of Central America? In that way, no. If there were no other sign of our criminal negligence, our banal manner of celebrating our independence would reveal with melancholy eloquence what we are and what may be expected of us.

This lament, under the heading "Thus We Are," was followed a day or two later by "Thus We Ought to Be," and the editor proposed that the money about to be spent on fireworks and bands be applied toward founding, in New York or Washington,

> . . . a serious, authoritative newspaper in the language of that country and our own, charged with making clear to all ambitious persons of the North American union that we are peoples in the concert of nations sufficient unto ourselves, needing the tutelage of no one and disposed to maintain our liberty. . . . With such a publication we could say to the North Americans that we are neither redskins nor Hawaiian negroes, that we have done something practical for our defense, that these countries are not merely peopled by savages, "natives," as they call us. We could tell them and repeat, that we have institutions, have made a relative progress, and, above all, we have great desires and aspirations. In this way, with a paper that would speak like a thousand tongues, there would be disseminated ideas favorable to us in the danger zone itself. We should be bivouacking among them, so to speak. Is not that a better way of remembering the anniversary of our independence?

Since those days much has been learned about the art and business of propaganda. During the Nicaraguan trouble in the winter of 1926–27, Mr. Sacasa was able to argue his case in American newspapers of good standing almost as promptly and as well as if he had had a newspaper of his own. Moreover, the advertisement which the War gave to the rights of small nations; their membership in the League of Nations; the peasant revolutions of eastern Europe; the Russian earthquake; the Mexican agrarian reforms and general racial renaissance — a variety of influences — have touched the Central American republics as well as the rest of the world.

If no more powerful, relatively, in comparison with the United States, they are a good deal less isolated. A little republic like Salvador not only is the internationally social equal, so to speak, of various small European republics which emerged from the War, but, with the more realistic attitude of Europe toward the United States, it can count on moral support, in its disputes with the United States, not only from Spanish America but from Europe as well. If the tone of the Central American press toward the United States is no more friendly than it was before 1914, it is, at any rate, less morbid and touched with an inferiority complex, and, as the United States has nothing physically to fear from the Isthmian republics, and everything to gain from their growth to adult, independent states, an added note of truculence in their newspapers may even be reckoned a good thing.

No small part of Salvador's air of prosperity, including the improvement of its city streets and roads, grew out of the loan contract made in 1923 between Salvador, on the one hand, and Mr. Minor C. Keith and the International Railways of America, on the other. Coincident with the floating of this loan—about $15,000,000 in all, in three series of bonds, drawing interest at 8, 6, and 7 per cent, to be retired in 1948, 1957, and 1958—the United States Department of State, at the request of the government of Salvador and the interested bankers, agreed to assist in the appointment of a collector of customs and to help in settling any disputes that might arise by referring them to the chief justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. The loan, which consolidated Salvador's internal and external debts, was secured by a 70-per-cent lien on the customs,

and interest charges and sinking-fund are collected and forwarded to New York before customs' receipts are turned over to the government.

The arrangement seemed to work so smoothly, and the American customs' collector to be enjoying his job and to be liked by those he worked with so much more than American "experts" in Latin America often are, that one is moved to mention here a point often overlooked.

At the club in Guatemala City, late one afternoon, I sat with a group of American business men engaged in the pleasant occupation of shaking dice for the before-dinner drinks. One of them, who had had many years of practical experience as a resident agent in Spanish America, remarked:

> I've written my office over and over again: never mind how efficient a man may seem at home or how successful a go-getter, if he isn't considered "simpatico" by the natives after he has been down here six months, he might just as well, so far as doing any business is concerned, pack up and go home.

It is a pity that those who have had the choosing of the "experts" of one sort and another whom we impose from time to time on Latin-American republics, have not had this sage advice in mind. Form and formality, the mere way things are done, count for more with any people of Spanish inheritance than with us. An "expert" ought to look and act like an expert, and to have a decisive and sure, if not the grand, manner. If you are going to be bossed by an outsider, the pill is a good deal easier to swallow if his manners are sympathetic and engaging, and if he looks as if he knew what he were talking about. It is very disagreeable to have your bills audited and your budgets cut down by some ill-dressed

and depressing foreigner who looks as if he might be getting a tenth of the salary your little country is compelled to pay him had he stayed at home.

The customs-collector of Salvador was of quite another kind. You ran across him—a slim, cheery, wide-awake young American, playing golf in the late afternoons at the country club, or out by himself in one corner of the course practising drives, and driving better, perhaps, than anybody else. He and his wife seemed to see the Salvadoreños as much as they did the foreign colony and to enjoy their native friends. If you asked him questions about Salvador he had prompt, concrete, and intelligent answers, and he was not merely hanging onto his job but thinking of other things that might benefit the country, such, for example, as a budget-law and a mortgage-bank to assist in making small loans.

Short-term loans are not much known in Central America. If a planter borrows money, he seems often to feel that he need never pay the principal back provided he keeps up with the interest. As a result, interest rates are almost prohibitive. The little men can't borrow, as a rule; the big ones are assisted by some foreign banking and trading firm.

In short, here was a man who was not merely a carpetbagger, acting as a sort of watch-dog or brake, but a go-ahead human being trying to contribute something. And, however the papers may have felt it necessary to keep up the stencil of anti-Americanism, the actual facts were that instead of blocking or trying to get rid of the customs-collector, the Salvadoreños kept putting more and more work on him.

The medical work done under the auspices and with the help of the Rockefeller Foundation is another ex-

ample of American influence in Central America which represents a very practical sort of "panamericanism." Hookworm campaigns have been the opening wedge for other things—for state health boards, for thousands of clinical and laboratory examinations, urinary and blood tests, for introducing the custom of microscopical examination and chemical analyses where it did not exist before. Before the Rockefeller people came to Nicaragua, I was told, not a hospital in the country made a habit of laboratory examinations, and there were probably not more than four or five native physicians who were accustomed to using the microscope. Now that modern technical methods have been introduced, it is hoped that they will be continued with state funds when the Rockefeller help is withdrawn. Medical students who have come under the influence of the Rockefeller centres will doubtless incline to go to American medical schools rather than to Europe. Hygienic habits and sound medical practice are naturally not easy to introduce amongst populations as poor and undeveloped as the Central American peasantry, but the Rockefeller agents have made a beginning in all five republics.

IV

Pretty much everything revolves round coffee in Salvador, as in Costa Rica and Guatemala. If the Salvador crop does not fetch quite so high a price as that of Costa Rica, there is much more of it; and if less than that of Guatemala, it is mostly in native hands. Upper-class Salvadoreños seem more inclined than many Spanish-Americans to live and work on their own land, and to buy more land with their spare cash instead of spending

it abroad. There are various foreign-owned coffee fincas, and one in particular, the Hill estate near Santa Ana, an English property, is as much a show-place as the Vaughn estate, already mentioned, in Nicaragua. The second generation of Hills—the father married a Salvadoreña—are citizens of Salvador, and in general, there is nothing like the foreign ownership characteristic of Guatemala.

Coffee is one of the many things in which it is convenient to have had a grandfather. Most of the fine plantations which so charm the casual visitor and seem to provide so spacious and agreeable a life have at least one generation of loving and intelligent care worked into their soil and trees. One which runs up into the hills from the village of Santa Tecla, about half an hour's motor run from San Salvador, is now run by the son and the son-in-law of the original settler, one of those old-timers, like Vaughn and Hill, who came out when land was cheap, have carried on through all the ups and downs of thirty or forty years, and now stand by with their wisdom and experience to help the new generation.

It was the son-in-law, a wide-awake young man named Flynn, who took us over the plantation and explained the whole process, from setting out the plants —first grown in a nursery—through to the drying, pulping, and sorting of the beans for shipment. We ground up-hill in an old-fashioned Ford—they kept their Cadillacs for town use—under aisles of shade from *madre de cacao* and *pepeto*, or Inga Vera trees, clear to the summits of the foot-hills roundabout the volcano of San Salvador. Beside each coffee-tree they dig a hole about a cubic yard wide and deep, partly to

catch the rainy-season water, partly for the weeds, which are carefully kept down during the growing season and thrown in here to rot. The trees begin to bear after about three years, but are not full grown until several years after that. The crop on this place was roundabout 5,000 or 6,000 quintals—500,000 or 600,000 pounds. With wages at about 25 to 30 cents, an export tax of 2 cents gold per pound, transportation down to the sea, and other expenses, their coffee cost them from 6 to 10 cents a pound, as I recall Mr. Flynn's estimate. (Others said that about 15 cents a pound was the usual local estimate for the cost of putting export coffee abroad ship.) They had just sold 3,600 quintals of the next crop, as it hung on the trees, Flynn said, for 26 cents a pound f. o. b. Salvador.

With such costs and such prices, it isn't strange that coffee-planters often are able to spend most of the growing season travelling in the States or in Europe. The local manager for Grace & Company, who accompanied me that day, had had some experience in farming in California, with raw land at $250 an acre up, laborers' wages similar to those of good mechanics, and expensive water-rights.

"It's just water, you know," he said, "but something happens to it on the way through the irrigation canals. It's the same water, but it keeps getting more and more expensive. . . ."

He had finally said good-by to his farm and gone to Central America, and now, for what you would pay for a second-rate three-room apartment in New York, he had a charming little house of his own within a walled garden; a car, servants, interesting work, knew "everybody," and occupied a status in the little capital some-

where between that enjoyed at home by, let us say, the president of a large bank and abroad by a diplomat in active service. For the man who has had his whirl of foreign ports or who has children of school age whom he wants to grow up as thoroughgoing Americans, these berths in little, out-of-the-way cities are not so good, but for the younger and the unattached they have many attractions.

On top of one of the ridges, we came to the quarters of the laborers who live permanently on the plantation instead of merely during the picking. There was a common kitchen, where the women made *tortillas* and cooked beans and rice—the raw materials were included in their wages—and several barrack-like rooms, built round a court and fitted with double-tier bunks. They were dismal, flea-ridden caves, inappropriate enough, it seemed, to a climate where fresh air and space are the cheapest things, but security is security, and as long as the permanent laborers worked on the plantation they were sure of the use of a bit of land for a garden or a roof and enough to eat.

They were just being paid off as we arrived, shuffling up rather timorously to a window, behind which a dashing *mandador*, in riding-clothes and Simon Legree mustaches, counted out the two or three colones ($1 to $1.50) which most of them seemed to have earned during a week's work. The number of "tasks" the laborer had done was written down in a ledger and 30 cents gold seemed the usual pay for the required tasks of a "day" that could be completed in from three to five hours if the workman wished to hurry a bit.

On the way down-hill, we stopped at the bungalow looking out over the valley where the son and his wife

lived, went through the *beneficio* and inspected all its improved Scotch coffee-milling machinery, and so on down to the spacious house in the old-fashioned Spanish colonial style, in Santa Tecla, where the father lived. High-ceilinged *corridores*, with frescoes overhead and side walls decorated with Italian and Spanish tiles, surrounded the patio, and from them opened huge rooms, five on each side the square, finished in various sorts of tropical woods.

The son-in-law, having shaken up something refreshing for his guests, gossiped of middlemen as farmers of all sorts do the world over. The roasters were great "ballyhoo" artists, he thought. They made up a blend that was profitable, sold the notion that that particular blend had something unique, and got 55 or 60 cents for what the grower received 20. What they really wanted to do, was to get in some of that "cheap, harsh-flavored Brazil coffee"—indeed, they had to do that, in order to keep up the uniformity of their blend. There wasn't enough of the mild Central American coffee grown, for uniform "mass" blending. In Brazil, they didn't need shade-trees, their trees were hardier, the pickers simply stripped the branches instead of picking the berries separately—everything was done on a more wholesale scale.

Why did Hoover want to try to stop the Brazilian valorization scheme? Give the growers a chance. It might look like a soft job, and certainly, with present prices, coffee-growers were having their innings for a time. But it was a question how long consumption would keep pace with increased production—anything that offered big profits naturally attracted capital—and even now there was talk in the United States of 15-

cent coffee for next year. . . . We rolled back to town in one of their new Cadillacs.

V

Santa Tecla is the take-off for the occasional hikers—generally foreigners—who want to climb the volcano of San Salvador. It is a simple enough climb, as climbs go, two and a half to three hours of brisk hiking from the outskirts of the village up through the coffee, either on a road or a clear trail all the way, and well worth taking, not only for the cross-section of rural Salvador one sees on the way, and the views of the valley in which the capital lies, but for the really impressive crater that yawns below you when you reach the top.

It must be about half or three-quarters of a mile across, and possibly 1,500 feet deep. This immense pit is now clothed with trees and undergrowth, but at the bottom, in the middle of a floor of bare lava rock, is another, comparatively small cone of cinders, which suggests, as you look down on it from above, the little cone of sand at the bottom of an active boiling spring. The rim of the main crater is about 8,000 feet above the sea. The whole volcano, which was spouting smoke and rocks during the last great earthquake and eruption in 1917, was quiescent, although the rocks of the floor were warm, and sulphurous vapor oozed from between the stones at various places on the sides.

The little cone far below on the big crater's floor was so intriguing that we scrambled down through the trees and undergrowth of the more or less vertical sides of the greater pit, to see just how big it actually was, close to, to take its picture, and have our sandwiches on the warm stones near by. The climb down to it and up

AT THE HIPÓDROMO AND SPORTS FIELD, SAN SALVADOR.

THE INNER CRATER AT THE BOTTOM OF THE MAIN CRATER OF POAS VOLCANO.
The author is seated on the rim.

again took about one and a half hours each way. Halfway down we ran across an old charcoal-burner. He was squatting here, apparently, because his wood cost him nothing, but everything he ate or drank had to be lugged in by hand, his timber had to be dragged up the almost vertical sides, and later, in the shape of little bundles of charcoal, carted to Santa Tecla or the capital, and after dragging ourselves back to the top through the thin hot air, we decided that he earned all he got.

The little crater was possibly a hundred yards across and about fifty feet high, and sitting on its rim, at the bottom of that vast and somewhat creepy pit, one heard nothing but the birds singing away for dear life in verdure that lined the sides, so that the whole great well was atwitter, like one vast aviary.

All the way up from Santa Tecla, that bright Sunday morning, we met peasants downward-bound for market, on foot and on horseback, with vegetables and whatever they could get together to sell. Going down, in the late afternoon, we met them all climbing home again, the women riding a bit drowsily, the men all genially drunk. If not an ideal way to spend a Sunday, there was this to be said for the crater-farmers, that by the time they had climbed two or three thousand feet up-hill in the tropical sun they would doubtless be, if still alive, about as sober as when they left home.

Among the upper-class Salvadoreños encountered, in the intervals of exploring city pavements, volcanoes, and coffee, were two newspaper editors and two former presidents. Señor Pinto, of the *Diario Latina,* who bites much more amiably than he barks against the United States in his paper, spoke of the comparatively hard lot of the ordinary peasant. It was the general no-

tion that an intelligent man with capital could buy a coffee estate and, with luck, pay for it in profits in four or five years. The laborers, on the other hand, got nothing but a bare existence. Señor Rivas of the *Diario del Salvador*, who, like his colleague, complained of the arrogant political manners of the United States in its dealings with Central America, told of the difficulties he was beginning to have with his workmen. They objected to linotypes because they threw printers out of work, and they held meetings and talked of taking over the plant. It was plain from the talk of both gentlemen that new and troublesome currents were beginning to seep in here, as elsewhere, in the once patriarchal Isthmus.

Ex-President Alfonso Quinoñez, whose remark about the "misterizing" of the Costa Rican peasant I have already quoted, was largely responsible for the road-and-pavement programme now transforming his country. He thought that they might be getting airplanes, as well as automobiles and roads, before long, and that Central America would probably change much in the next ten years. Colombia was, at the moment, the great boom country of the Caribbean, and when the new transportation and other improvements they were getting there had opened up the country, the *finqueros* of the smaller Central American republics might find it harder to get good prices for their coffee. Don Alfonso built a number of model schools during his administration—you see several of them in driving from San Salvador over the mountains to the port of La Libertad—and he said there was still much to do before the lower schools of Salvador were organized as well in practice as they are in theory. It was no simple matter, he said, for even when primary education was compulsory in

theory, it was hard to make the peasants send their children to school and to keep them there.

With Señor Don Jorge Melendez, who preceded Don Alfonso in the presidency—both gentlemen come of the same clan—I visited the electric-light and power plant in which he is interested, in the hills just outside the capital, and drove thence out to his country house and sugar-plantation. The spacious and entirely modern villa, with its gardens and magnificent view, was just the place in which a similarly well-to-do English family would prefer to spend most of their time, but not many upper-class Central Americans care much for country life, however much their incomes may depend on their plantations, and although Don Jorge did keep up a sort of bachelor-hall in the big empty house, his wife, he said, preferred the capital.

There was a sugar-mill, the storage-sheds of which were now piled high with the fragrant new sugar, corn, and coffee, vegetables and fruits of all sorts, some 500 peasants regularly attached to the estate, while 200 more came for the coffee-picking. They had just finished the season's sugar-grinding, and the day before had had the usual celebration, with a greased pole to climb, dancing, and unlimited *tortillas* and drinks for everybody in the good old patriarchal style. This was the party already mentioned, at which almost all the young-lady guests had been educated at American boarding-schools.

It looked a very delightful sort of combination of independent business and spacious country life, and, indeed, it did represent a kind of plantation which has largely ceased to exist in such highly industrialized tropical neighborhoods as Cuba. In Cuba, so I was told,

a "small" grinder, like Don Jorge (his mill yielded about 65,000 bags) can no longer compete with the "big" mills, which can afford machinery that grinds and extracts a larger per cent of sugar from a given amount of cane. In Cuba the "small" independent grinders have been squeezed out to become colones on the bigger estates, on which they rent parcels of land and pay for them in cane turned in to the central mill.

Don Jorge had been everywhere and seemed as much at home physically and temperamentally, in New York or London or Paris, as in his native tropics. He had played cricket in England, he had his New York hotel where the clerk always remembered his name and face, he was enthusiastically interested in machinery and new mechanical inventions of all sorts, and he rattled on with such a bland and amusing irony about Salvadoreñan politics in general and his part in them that it was hard to believe the things his political enemies said about him.

A clever, wealthy, resourceful man of this type, with a numerous clan of cousins, uncles, brothers, and sons-in-law, all working together in the patriarchal style, can, once he is president, not only pretty well control his little country, clear out to the remotest village, but dictate his successor. I asked Don Jorge about this.

"Well, you see," he said, with one of his disarming smiles, "you *externalize* your wishes, so to say. You let the notion get round that this or that man would be a good fellow for president. Then everybody begins to whisper to everybody else, 'Don Jorge wants So-and-So,' and they start forming clubs to support him. If the opposition wants to form clubs, why you let them do so by all means"—but one got the notion that when elec-

tion day came round there were ways of managing things.

Don Jorge told how he walked through the streets with his successor when the latter was nominated, and nobody said a word. One enemy had promised to tear his eyes out "because he stabilized the *colon* at two to the dollar. That fellow sold his coffee abroad for gold, and paid his working people in silver, at the rate of five or six to the dollar. He was starving his peasants, and yet he tried to make out the country would be ruined if we stabilized the *colon*. . . ."

He was very droll about a demonstration against him during his term as president when, as the opposition tell the story, machine-guns were turned on the crowd from the cathedral belfry and several score killed or wounded. According to Don Jorge, those foolish people were pushing and shouting out there and a machine-gun was fired into the air to frighten them, and such a panic ensued that they went stumbling over each other, several of their own weapons were discharged in the confusion, and eight or ten of them hurt. In other words, they shot themselves.

Criticism of the United States, Don Jorge explained, wasn't due to dislike of us, generally, but was more often made for local political purposes.

"You see, if the criticism is violent enough, why the American minister complains to the president, and then the president has to shut down a paper or something, and then the opposition raises the cry of 'Tyranny!' Whoever is in power, wants American help. Whoever is 'out' thinks it convenient to attack America."

I was reminded of Russia in the old days as we strolled about the plantation and the peasants gravely

took off their sombreros as Don Jorge passed. He tried to get them to work more, he said. Few of them did what could properly be called a day's work, but their wants were so easily satisfied that when they had earned enough to exist they stopped. When he tried to argue the matter, they just laughed at him, he said. As it was, they got their food and quarters and about 25 cents a day. Two huge dogs greeted us. One was "Kaiser Wilhelm" and the other "President Harding." People named horses and ships after presidents and kings, Don Jorge said; why not dogs?

A foreigner, commenting on local politics, said that it was very hard for any president, once in office, to attempt to cut off what a Tammany man, for instance, would regard as "legitimate graft." His own people would "get" him, if he did. Araujo, who preceded Melendez as president, tried it, he said, and one fine evening, as he was sitting quietly in the plaza listening to the band, several poor *peons* who had been hired to murder him, killed him with their machetes. The *Guardia Nacional* promptly shot the murderers so that all mouths were stopped.

Referring to the new pavements and roads, this man said that it was all but impossible to make the wealthy people pay their share of the resulting taxes. They would put up their rents promptly enough, but let the municipality whistle for its taxes. The improvements were a fine thing but it would take some time for the simpler sort of people to get used to them. In the little seaport of La Libertad, just over the hills from the capital, the American contractors had put in a fine new water-plant with a violet-ray filter. The natives simply wouldn't turn off their water-taps and enough water

ran away for a city seven times the size of La Libertad. In the capital, itself, people sometimes stole the new man-holes and sold them for old iron—it was quite a temptation to a man who, maybe, made only half a dollar a day. And they threw all sorts of things down the storm-sewers — *petates* (a rush sleeping-mat), old clothes, and so on.

He had lived in several tropical neighborhoods, including the Philippines, and was struck, he said, in contrast with what he found in Salvador, with the Filipino hunger for education, their quickness, cleverness, and artistic taste, as expressed in their well-made bamboo houses, with raised floors and woven-rush walls, which even the simplest peasants built; their home-woven cloth, home-made furniture. In the matter of native arts and crafts, indeed, only the Guatemaltecos have much to show, and that, apparently, because the Indian population of Guatemala is larger and more unmixed with white blood than that of any of the Central American countries.

VI

I said good-by to the capital one dazzling afternoon, just after luncheon, and took the train northwestward over the mountains to Salvador's second city, Santa Ana. The country was rich and carefully cultivated all the way, with corn-fields running up slopes that would make a Kansan gasp, and pineapples, pomegranates, and all sorts of tropical fruits at every station. Here again, one had the impression of a tropical agricultural neighborhood pretty well grown-up. All the way there were noble views of volcanoes, and for part of the

journey one could look 'cross country to the active cone of Izalco, which flings a big puff of smoke up against the blue every few minutes.

Santa Ana is a solid-looking old town, less animated than the capital, but with a good deal of wealth locked up in the coffee fincas which surround it. Of these, the show-place is that of Mr. John Hill, another British old-timer, who came out to the Isthmus nearly forty years ago with a shilling in his pocket, started in with a plantation yielding about 120 quintals, married into one of the native families, learned all there was to know about coffee, not only in Central America but in Brazil, as well, and now has a plantation producing, in a good year, as much as 26,000 quintals, and a theoretical profit of $200,000 to $300,000.

His country house is in the outskirts of Santa Ana, adjoining a sort of experimental plantation—the main plantation climbs into the hills—and thither I was taken in the father's car by one of two sons, both educated in the United States and both now citizens of Salvador. Armed with a stout walking-stick, the elder Hill sallied forth, expounding coffee lore as he walked and every now and then thrusting the stick into the black loam surrounding the coffee-trees. The stick was a sounding-rod. If it sank into soft earth for a foot and a half or so, all very well; if it didn't, and it appeared that his work-people were merely scratching and not really cultivating, they heard from him.

He got as much as four pounds of coffee from a tree, he said—one pound is often considered good. He showed the different methods of planting trees, talked of the importance of phosphorus, and of how the shade-trees, which rise above the low coffee-trees, made a sort

of blanket of even, moist heat. He was regarded as *delicado*, he said, because he treated both his trees and his work-people more thoughtfully than was the custom in the neighborhood, yet it was plain that he knew how to drive.

"Won't have my people talking!" said Mr. Hill emphatically. "They can't talk and work, too. If they start gabbing, I put 'em on piece work. When a man hoes I want to see his hoe sink in like this"—and he jabbed his stick in, vertically—"it mustn't just scrape. A workman, in a climate like this, ought to be sweating in half an hour. If I see a man with his coat on, I put him on piece work."

He was one of the first to try day work, instead of the usual "task" system, and found it worked better with the better sort of laborers. He also got the women to working.

"They used to do nothing—just take care of their babies, cook for their husbands, and potter round their places. But I kept urging them to work and now I have plenty. But they all used to do more work for less pay than they do nowadays. They could do twice as much as they do, if they wanted to, but they're born lazy, and once they've got enough to eat, don't care. By cutting down their work, they've really increased their wages. Why, lots of these women go round now with imitation-silk stockings on, while they're carrying armfuls of brush and dirt. Naturally, they tear 'em to pieces. And you have a hard time nowadays getting men to work barefooted on the drying floors—they complain the stone floor's too hot and that the coffee beans hurt their feet!"

He had tried to build better houses for his peasants,

he said, and sanitary latrines, but the latter were so misused that they finally had to set fire to them. They had little sense of private property when it came to such things as fruit-trees, which they regarded as gifts common as the sun and rain. If a planter had good fruit-trees, he generally cut a hole in the fence in a convenient spot as he knew the peasants would cut one anyway. He told of a neighbor who had found a man in one of his fruit-trees and ordered him down. The man replied that if the owner didn't look out he would come down and jolly well show him something, or words to that effect, and as the proprietor had no arms with him, he retired.

"'Bolshevism'? Oh, yes," said Mr. Hill cheerily. "It's drifting in. The work-people hold meetings on Sundays and get very excited. They say: 'We dig the holes for the trees! We clean off the weeds! We prune the trees! We pick the coffee! Who earns the coffee, then? . . . *We* do!' . . . Why, they've even picked out parcels that please them most, because they like the climate or think that the trees are in better condition and will produce more. Yes, there'll be trouble one of these days. . . ."

Apropos of this, is the following from a letter, written at about the same time, to one of the American trade journals to which Mr. Hill contributes under the signature of "Planter":

> The coffee is all picked and I got just 41.19 per cent of what I had the preceding year, and as my plantations are well cared for and fertilized each year, and always kept clean and well cultivated, I do not think anybody has had any more.
>
> . . . Here in Salvador motor-cars are being offered at greatly reduced prices, though some of them are only a year old and not much used . . . by people who find that they can-

not keep up with their families' expectations. There are all the signs of an impending crisis, but people here, when anything of the kind threatens, close their town houses and go to live on the plantations, where they eat things grown on the land and wear old clothes. They stay away until things clear up. There are no fixed bases which oblige people to maintain any position and when there is no money people don't spend any; so the hard times pass without any very visible effects remaining. . . .

. . . What we cannot get down is the workmen's wages and the moment we try, off they go elsewhere, and as the railway is still employing a good many, and government roads are still being made, the men find work elsewhere and get better pay. The whole of Central America seems to be coming under Socialist ideas, and we are much afraid that Mexican laws will be adopted in these republics, when it would be much more difficult to work here. . . .

The wages which Mr. Hill spoke of trying to reduce were about 25 cents a day in money, plus quarters and food. The American in charge of the pavement work in San Salvador told me that even with better wages it was hard to get Salvadoreñan peasants to work regularly in construction gangs. They preferred the pleasanter and more natural life on the coffee-plantations.

Mr. Hill had kept out of politics, he said, but doubtless his sons, as Salvador citizens, would be more or less drawn into them, and, he hoped, for the country's good. It was odd to sit there, in his spick-and-span office and listen to the casual air with which this calm, capable, and polite Englishman told of the vigorous action the Santa Ana planters had once taken even within his memory, when the San Salvador government proposed to put what they considered a prohibitive export-duty on coffee; how they bribed the *teniente* with 25,000 pesos to open the door to the cuartel

one night, held up the garrison at the point of machine-guns, shot those officers who ventured to resist, and started thus an uprising which overthrew the government.

TO ZACAPA BY MULE

CHAPTER VII

TO ZACAPA BY MULE

I

Santa Ana, from which the International Railways was completing its line to the Guatemalan railroad town of Zacapa, has long been the starting-point for 'cross-country travel between the two republics, and it was from here, on my earlier visit, that I started on mule-back for a three days' journey over to Zacapa in the midst of the July rains. This time, a scout for one of the companies which make regular daily motor-trips between Santa Ana and Guatemala City was trying to sign me up before I left the capital; at Santa Ana, another bobbed up as soon as I reached the hotel, and every morning before daylight, one was awakened by the hullaballoo of cars getting under way.

All very modern and efficient, and different from the old days, when the journey was by way of being an adventure, and the stranger starting from Santa Ana during the rains was harassed with tales of bandits, unfordable streams, foodless trails, foundered animals, and so on. I remember the discussions as to which might be the least perilous route; the Italian merchant in San Salvador who telephoned ahead to help me; the wrangle over mules; and the tremors of the peasant-lad who finally consented to act as guide and mule-boy and brave the supposed perils of crossing the frontier into the land then held in the tough fist of old Don Estrada Cabrera.

Yes, very different, indeed, as a capable-looking American car drummed up to the hotel at three-thirty A. M., the sleepy porter strapped on the luggage and took his tip, and one slumped down into comfortable cushions with the prospect of high climbs, splendid views, and into Guatemala City—which used to be days away—before dark.

But travel by motor-car, over Central American mountain roads during the rainy season, is still a gamble. The car itself was suffering from almost every possible illness, the half-breed driver had only the sketchiest notion of his job, and after one of those days which, however tragic at the time, seem only absurd in retrospect, we wheezed painfully up a terrific grade in a desolate part of the Guatemalan mountains, and, close to the summit, gave a few faint coughs and stopped.

We had had nothing to eat or drink since morning, there was no settlement for miles in either direction, nor house, even, so far as one could see; only blackness and stars, and the wind moaning down from the cold summits. The stars went out, gradually, the darkness thickened, and it began to rain.

We tumbled the luggage, already soaked and plastered with mud, inside, and settled down to make a night of it. The two little mongrels on the back seat—he more negro than Indian, she more Indian than negro, and both with a few phrases of parrot English they had picked up on some trip to New Orleans—were soon peacefully asleep in each other's arms. The driver snored over his wheel. Unable to drop off for a long time, I smoked one cigarette after another, listened to the melancholy wind, and thought of that other, mule-back journey, years before. . . .

II

. . . We got away on a Sunday morning, then, just as it was growing light. For an hour or more, peasant women, with baskets of fruit and vegetables on their heads, pattered swiftly by, with their half-whispered "Adios," and then the sun came over the mountains, the wet road hardened, and the trees and grass dried. One of the two mules then was as ailing as our automobile. My own animal, if not the antelope he had appeared in the stable-yard at Santa Ana, was at any rate "*regulár*," but the cargo-mule was all but useless. We had twenty-seven miles of up-and-down trail to cover before the afternoon rain, and before five of them were behind us, I was waiting for him at every turn in the road.

Such delays swell to ridiculous proportions in unknown tropical country. The rain may last half an hour and it may last all night and it will pound through almost anything you can put on. And the clouds have a way of thickening and creeping down from the mountain-tops which is positively blood-curdling. The unknown trail pulls one way, your cargo-mule, with trunks swaying above his trembling legs, pulls the other, and between the two your own Rosinante goes grunting and slipping, while the last of the tropical sun bores down like a corkscrew on top of your head.

Poco à poco, as they say, but the gringo finds it hard to fall into that sensible philosophy all at once, and generally wastes in kicking and cursing the energy that might better be applied in working out a solution of the Caribbean question.

The poor cargo-mule finally disappeared altogether,

and finally a stocky young fellow on foot, whom I had been trying to keep ahead of, overtook me and reported that he had passed the animal, miles back, tacking back and forth across the road and very *caprichoso*, indeed! . . . This young man, a peddler returning to his native Guatemala, was carrying a pack and reeling off his three miles an hour, up hill and down, regular as a clock. By pounding the mule into a trot, I could overhaul him, but at a walk he soon passed us, with his round-faced smile.

A thatched hut turned up about eleven and I asked for lunch. No, they had nothing, the old mistress of the place said, but when I said that coffee and *tortillas* and a couple of raw eggs would be enough, she consented to find them. Studying all the stranger's motions with intent but respectful curiosity, she asked her husband what *potencia* he might be from.

"*Estados Unidos*," I explained, and both said "Ah-h-h!" and looked at each other as if I had come out of the sea.

And how were things in my country—were there revolutions there? No, I said, only one in over a hundred years. The husband said that it must be very quiet there, then. I said that there was plenty of noise from machinery.

"*Ah, si!* . . ." he agreed, his eyes dilating a little. "*Que ciencia!* . . ."

The road led into beautiful country, with lakes, and cattle standing, belly-deep in quiet water, and magnificent trees overarching the trail. The light-gray, buttressed trunks of *ceibas* rose like cathedral pillars to their flat umbrella-like tops, and now and then there were old stone bridges which suggested Europe rather than "wild" country.

Finally appeared the little white town of Metapan, and I rode up to the branch store of my Italian friend, Señor Borghi B. Daglia, and presented his letter. It was not unlike a general store at home, but for its barred windows and the fountain in the patio, and the proprietor's formal courtesy. He, Don Antonio Calderon, had a servant take charge of the mule, took down from his shelves, with apologies for the lack of ice, several bottles of beer that had come all the way from Germany; and in a big, clean room adjoining the store he had a cot laid with fresh sheets, gave me a pair of Chinese sandals, and for the street door an enormous iron key.

An American, at least in those days, was as rare as an elephant in Metapan, and the market-woman in the little plaza who was selling cigarettes at the rate of twenty for 1½ cents, guessed Spaniard, Mexican, and Peruvian, before opening her eyes at the news that she was chatting with an Americano.

With a house separate from his store, a big patio with orange-trees, on the edge of which the table was set, and even a home-made shower-bath, Don Antonio was plainly a person of consequence. We had more German beer for dinner, and very good food served by his placid wife, while their little girl looked on with big eyes, and Don Antonio, speaking of the son they had in boarding-school in Guatemala City, apologized for the shabbiness of his entertainment with the slightly ironical remark that they "were only poor Indians."

While we lingered at the table in the dusk—the rain having held off, after all—a clerk appeared with the welcome news that the unhappy *bestia de barga* and his equally miserable driver, had finally arrived. The boy had a sad story to tell of a tottering beast which had fallen flat and scattered luggage all over the road and

now looked more like a drowned rat than anything that would ever get to Zacapa.

Morning found him no better, we tried to tempt him with corn, and finally Don Antonio came to the rescue with the proposal that his clerk should loan me his own saddle-mule, while he telephoned back to Santa Ana and arranged that the perfidious muleteer refund part of the money and leave it on deposit in the branch there. No sooner said than done, thanks to Salvador's excellent telephone system and the potent name of Borghi Daglia & Co., and presently round trotted the fresh mule, strong as the other two put together, and a sight to see. The baggage was transferred to the former saddle-animal, the difference paid to the amiable clerk, and off we jogged in high spirits in the bright morning sunshine.

After five hours' up-and-down going, with views of distant volcanoes and of the lakes of the day before, we came to the little settlement of La Hermita on the Guatemalan frontier. Dire tales had been told of this place—baggage pulled to pieces by alcoholic inspectors, duties levied right and left, and I rode up to the little guard-house fearing the worst. Three soldiers lounging on the porch grinned bashfully, explained that the *receptor* was visiting in Concepcion, a couple of leagues farther on, stood up and shouldered arms to have their pictures taken, and when the cargo-mule arrived an hour later, merely glanced at it and told me to go ahead.

Meanwhile a very pleasant young *mestiza*, mistress of the adobe hut across the way, had found fresh grass for the mule and luncheon for me. She served it in her one room, which had a floor of hard-packed, cleanly

swept earth, a hammock, table, two or three home-made, leather-bottomed chairs, and two beds made of rawhide stretched over a wooden frame with matting on top.

Señora Cupertina Guerra was one of those women, met now and then on these mountain trails, who might have graced another station had fate and a little education put her there. She was well and finely made. Her round bare arms and the shoulders from which her single white slip was dropping were like golden fruit and had at the same time that healthy firmness characteristic of these peasant women who think nothing of tramping a dozen miles to market with a big basket of produce on their heads. And behind her physical comeliness there lurked a certain gentleness and rightness of feeling which seemed waiting, a little wistfully, for some language in which to express itself.

Her little children peeped, big-eyed, round the corner of the door while I was eating, and when I took their picture Doña Cupertina asked how much pictures cost and couldn't she have one. I said that if she would give me her address I would send prints from Guatemala. She disappeared and returned with another young woman, the *sabia*, evidently, of the village, to write it for her.

The prints were duly dispatched from Guatemala, to make the uncertain mule-back journey back to La Hermita. I enclosed a stamped and addressed envelope, little expecting to see it again, for Spanish-American reserve, or indolence, or shyness, or something, generally means that such communications might as well have been dropped into a well, even when one's friends for a day are more articulate than was Doña Cupertina.

But weeks afterward, the envelope arrived in New York, enclosing a little sheet of old-fashioned note-paper with a pair of clasped hands at the top and the word "*Amistad.*" She had received "my esteemed letter and the portraits for which she was *altamente* grateful. She begged that I would accept her friendly salutations for all the members of my household, and it was her pleasure to sign herself, Your affectionate servant, Cupertina Guerra."

According to schedule, we should have spent the second night at Chiquimula, and reached Zacapa the third day, in time for the afternoon train for the capital. As things were, the best we could hope for was to get across the frontier and down to Concepcion, two leagues farther on. It was four o'clock before the cargo-mule was fed, and by that time the sprinkle that followed him in had swelled into the afternoon's rain. There was no place to stay in La Hermita, for despite the personal charms of Doña Cupertina, the prospect of spending a night cooped up in a one-room hut with a husband, wife, three children, mule-boy, various dogs, and possibly chickens and pigs, not to speak of fleas, was not alluring, and telling the sad-eyed mule-boy to start next morning at three, I climbed into a long saddle-slicker and pushed on through the rain.

The two leagues—six miles—was as flexible as it usually is in Central American travel. There are "little" leagues and "big" leagues, and the peasants, after centuries of being the under dog, always prefer to say what they think will please the *patrón.* So it's "*una vuelta y ja está!*"—just round the turn and there you are; or "*una leguita—no más!*"—a little league—no more; or "*por aquí no mas y ja está!*"—no more than this way and you're there already. And meanwhile the

trail climbs on, the rain soaks through the shoulders of your slicker, and the sweat through your clothes and the saddle-leather from the horse, and the night comes down as you peer desperately ahead for the white glimmer of a church belfry or a village light.

After an hour's going, a man, well-mounted, came jogging up from below. It was the *receptor*, himself, and hearing my explanation about the luggage, he waved the subject away, saluted with great politeness, repeated the conventional "at your disposition" and spurred his excellent animal away with a cheerful "*Que vaya bien!*" So much for the customs banditti!

The trail ran into heavy timber and the darkness shut down thick. One could see nothing but the blur of the white mule's ears and head. The narrow valley through which the road ran was like a tunnel, in which one could only dodge branches and let the mule find his way. Presently the little river foaming along at the left, turned sharply to the right across the path. At the same time a puzzling blur appeared slightly above us to the right, and the mule snorted and refused to approach it. It was a bridge, but the animal would have none of it, and there was nothing for it but to spur him into the river and trust he would pick up the trail on the other side.

He picked his way through with great circumspection, for the stream was swift, waist-deep, and full of boulders, scrambled up the other side, and stood stock-still. It seemed we were well lost at last, but after lighting several matches, I found the stone wall which often runs alongside these "royal" roads, and spurring ahead a few hundred yards picked up the welcome glimmer of village lights.

A moment later we clattered into the patio of Doña

Rodriguez's lodging-house and store, where she herself, her comely daughters, and several travellers were just finishing their supper under the shelter of the balcony. The sight of lights and food was as welcome to me as a gringo in a trailing yellow oilskin was unexpected to them, but Don Antonio's card of introduction, stating that the bearer wished provision for himself and beast, and would pay for the same, was sufficient, and we were soon snug enough.

Doña Rodriguez was also evidently something of a personage, for her house was floored and plastered, and consisted of several rooms in addition to the shop, and after supper she flung herself into the hammock, strung diagonally across the store, lit a cigarette, and began to question her travellers with the air of one used to having her own and quite sure of herself.

Of the other guests for the night, one was a young farmer with a superb mule on which he had made the whole twenty leagues, sixty up-and-down miles, from Santa Ana in one day. Another was an old fellow, much too fond of *guaro*, as the landlady bluntly told him. And a third was a peddler, much like the youth who had passed me the day before, who carried a pack-load of matches, put up in sealed tins to keep them dry. The old man and I had our cots in the open air under the porch roof, where it was cool and fresh after the rain, and we dozed off to the pleasant murmur of comfortable animals close by chewing their green feed.

We had sweet white rolls next morning as well as coffee and *tortillas*, and every one had at least two hours' start of me before the cargo-mule came trailing and we got away for Xaltepeque, five leagues away. Arriving there about one, we lunched with an amiable

"AT THE SIGN OF THE BULL," IN THE VILLAGE OF CHIQUIMULA, ON THE ROAD TO ZACAPA.

MARKET AT THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS LEADING TO A CHURCH, GUATEMALA CITY.

villager whom we overtook on the road as he was homeward bound with a mule-load of freshly cut *sacate*. It was a clean little village, with an old church and a general store before which hung the sign of a bull and the name "Morgan."

While I was looking about the plaza, the genial young peddler of the day before turned up, and when I tried to buy some fruit and the market-woman wouldn't take my Salvador money, he bought me some, himself, and waved away all attempts to make change with the words that we were "friends of the trail," and I might be buying some for him to-morrow.

As we were chattering, a native drifted up and I remarked that the church must be very old.

"Very old," he agreed.

"How old? . . ."

"O," said he, "a thousand years, at least!"

"*Que—hombre!* . . ." remonstrated the young peddler, reminding him that it was less than five hundred since the Spaniards came.

"*Ah—si!* . . ." sighed the other, imperturbably. "Well, there's an old woman nearly a hundred years old, lives in that corner house, and she says the church was already built when she was born!"

Beyond Xaltepeque, the steep mountainsides were hung with smoke where the peasants were burning off the ground to plant their corn. They simply stick the seed in amongst the blackened stumps, and the rains and hot sun do the rest. The country became more rugged, and suggested the canyon country of our own far West. Peaks sharply split, sheer-rock faces, lifted dizzily from the valley down which the road ran. The comfortable, closely tilled look of the Salvador land-

scape began to give way to the more sombre face of northeastern Guatemala.

We passed San Jacinto at about four o'clock, and the rain still holding off, pushed on to Santa Helena. This was a collection of mud huts, pigs, and very indifferent natives, none of whom knew where I might spend the night and cared less. After asking if there weren't a priest in the village—"*Si* . . . *hai* . . ." they murmured—and hurrying over to the church, only to learn that he lived in San Jacinto and only came over for mass, now and then, I finally found a clean little shop, on the edge of the village, and a man and his wife who said they had no extra beds but would gladly take me in.

Long skirts of rain were already trailing down the valley toward us. With them at his heels, the speck of a cargo-mule appeared far off down the road at last, and we got him unloaded and the baggage under cover, just before the deluge broke.

My new hosts, with their three little children, slept in one of their two rooms and used the other for a shop. The open veranda opening on the inner patio was their dining-room, and near by was a half-open kitchen where their slatternly little servant curled up at night. They, too, had wooden floors, and the husband had mastered several English phrases of which he was rightly proud, having dug them, without a master, out of a phonetic-spelling phrase-book sent out to advertise an American patent medicine. He asked many questions about the United States and by way of showing his standing in the neighborhood showed bills for goods sent him on credit by merchants in Zacapa and Chiquimula, with no further guarantee than his good name.

His wife, who had one of those oval, sweetly reposeful, almost Oriental faces, sometimes seen among the *mestizas*, was at once the subordinate and more responsible member of the family. As we sat that evening beside the dim kerosene lamp, talking of the wonders of the United States, it was the husband who entertained the guest, while the madonna-like wife sat apart, rolling, with fascinating rapidity, the cigarettes sold in their shop. When I asked how many she could make in an evening, she answered by giving the amount they would sell for, and seemed to have no wish to continue the conversation, but when it came time to pay next morning, it was the silent wife who reckoned up value of lodging, meals, and grass for mules, and announced the bill.

When bedtime came, and I unlimbered, for the first and only time, the folding cot I carried that summer over several thousand miles of land and water travel, my hosts closed and barred the solid wooden shutters of their room, where in the faint candle-light one of the little children was already asleep, lying like a sack, half on the floor and half on the cot across which she had dropped. The mule-boy was left to shift for himself under the patio eaves, and after assuring the husband that I was fond of air, night or any other kind, and that no burglars could get in without climbing over my bed, I finally persuaded him to let me leave the shop-shutters open and to spread my cot in front of the open window.

Long before daylight there were voices outside and the flaring of pine-knot torches, as loaded mules and market women got their early start for Chiquimula. They seemed to be going by for hours, with a furious

barking from all the village dogs as their torches wavered past.

It was well after sunup when we finally got away, jogged through Chiquimula, and after a long, hot climb, pulled over the last mountain shoulder and looked down on the valley of the Motagua and the roofs of Zacapa. The wide, rusty, sun-baked valley, with a shallow river running through it, reminded one of western Colorado. Zacapa lies about midway between the Caribbean and the highland capital. It has long had the repair-shops and dining-station of the more or less Americanized railroad, and when the link over to Santa Ana is completed, it will become an important junction-point.

Going down the hot road, I met an old Indian coming up with a load of *jojote* plums on his back. I still had nothing but Salvador money, and this he would not take, but though he needed money badly enough to toil miles up-hill with his little load of sour plums, he unslung his pack, gave me a handful "*para mojar la boca* (to wet your whistle)"— slung it on his sweating forehead again, and went slowly up the trail.

These Indian burden-carriers, with a pack held by a strap going over the forehead, are characteristic of the Guatemalan scene. The frames, or *cacaxtes*, in which they pack their luggage, suggest narrow chests of drawers or an old-fashioned wash-stand, and they will contain anything from pineapples and *papayas* to home-woven blankets and mountainous burdens of home-made pottery. In the western and more Indian districts of Guatemala, these carriers make a regular business of their portering, between villages, or between the hot lowlands and the cold highlands, where most of the Indian villages are, carrying pitifully small amounts

From a photograph by Ewing Galloway.

INDIAN BURDEN-CARRIERS OF GUATEMALA.

Many make a regular trade of carrying "hot-country" products many days' journey up into the mountains, and bringing down the pottery and homespun blankets of the highlands.

of the produce of each zone, back and forth, over distances that require days of travel. They go slogging along at a sort of jog-trot, head bent, eyes on the ground; say nothing to the white man unless first addressed, and merely lift and drop their eyes as they shuffle by, rarely emerging from that life of their own, in which, even after four centuries of contact with the white man, they still live.

For the last time, we lunched at a roadside *posada*, kept by a buxom *mestiza* who caught up a naked brown baby, nursed him as she watched us eat, then gave him a playful spank and turned him loose again. The road ran quickly down-hill, and just before sunset led us up to Zacapa's railroad hotel. A locomotive was switching in the yards, freight-cars lay along the sidings, on the porch lanky Americans in blue shirts lounged in their chairs, reading week-old American papers, chewing tobacco, and spitting over the rail. The rattle of heavy dishes came from the screened dining-room and from the kitchen the smell of hot food.

Well, here we were, back in the "civilization," toward which, through four days' heat and rains, we had been absurdly hurrying. And now, being here, and of the more or less irrational race of man, that blue wall of tumbled mountains which hid the little villages and the littler adventures of the trail, became suddenly inviting and wreathed with romance.

The brave little Santa Ana mule was now an old friend; the fresh dawns, hot noons, the rush in ahead of the afternoon rain; the new, strange inn, with its cigarettes, hammocks, and candle-light, and the restful murmur, as one fell asleep, of animals munching green feed, all became part of a sort of a paradise lost.

In this dreary outpost of industrialism, there was not

even grass for the animals. The railroaders had never heard of horses, it seemed, although doubtless they would have made the welkin ring if there were no ice-water for their own suppers. There was neither stable nor corral, nothing but a veranda-support to use as hitching-post, from which the hungry *bestias* looked round reproachfully. I finally found a pile of freshly cut *sacate* under the veranda. It belonged to a ranchman who had ridden in with a load of cattle. He had none to spare, but politely said I might have some, as he didn't like to see animals go unfed, and we grinned at each other, and Guatemalteco as he was, became, for the moment, citizens of the same country.

Having lived successfully on nothing at all for several days, I promptly made myself ill with iced drinks and other refinements. What the hotel waitress threw away would have made a banquet for the melancholy Salvadoreñan mule-boy, yet he crept whimpering to my door that evening with the word that he had traded his machete for food while trailing behind on the first day out, had no money and could get nothing from the kitchen to eat. He slept on the floor outside my door and at the first crack of dawn was on his way back to Santa Ana. . . .

III

. . . It seems that you can sleep very passably, scrunched into half of the front seat of an automobile, in a ditch by the roadside somewhere in the Guatemalan mountains. It was still dark when I woke up, but the rain had stopped, and presently the black turned to gray, and from the underbrush, all up and down the valley, came the sudden singing of birds. Then, in the

half-light—*manañita,* "little morning," as they say—a lone horseman came down the trail.

Ah! . . . a bandit, doubtless, for the neighborhood, the driver had cheerfully explained, was very "*ladronista.*" But the stranger only paused and stared at the sleeping-car and said very gently "*Señores!*" Then, as nobody answered at once, he repeated the salutation: "*Señores!*" At this the driver awoke, and a long confab took place at the end of which the stranger agreed to send a telegram from the next village for a new car.

The morning brightened, and a peasant came up-hill on his way to some road-mending. Again a conference, ending with the peasant's returning to his home in the valley with the promise to send up some coffee. All of an hour later, there came slowly and rhythmically swinging up the road, an angel of light. She was brown, had a yellow scarf thrown across one shoulder and wound about her hips, and she carried a plate covered with a napkin and on her head a brown jug.

There was sweet bread under the napkin and steaming coffee in the jug and it was worth going without anything to eat or drink since the morning before to find how exquisite a mere swallow of coffee may be and how little we value what we usually take for granted. O mountain-ascending nymph! O nectar in the Guatemalan dawn! Anyhow, it was a good breakfast, and the peasant girl charged the equivalent of 35 cents for all of it, which the chauffeur said was robbery, but which we paid with great pleasure.

Finally, with the help of wires and a truck-driver bound for Santa Ana, the engine was actually made to go again and we limped over the divide and on into the real Guatemala. The road swung downward in im-

mense curves. Everything was on a bigger, ruggeder scale than in Salvador. Far in the distance, where the capital lay, one could see five mighty volcanoes rising like blue islands from the sea. Their feet were hidden in distance and mist, only their exquisitely beautiful heads lifted above it, strong, serene, free.

The air became warmer, both with the drop in altitude and the climbing of the sun. We came to an apiary, where honey was strained and poured into iron tanks for export, and the amiable peasant-caretaker gave us a taste of his honey; then villages, and finally lunch, and a shift into a big motor-bus for the final descent into the capital.

The new driver was a knowing individual, very contemptuous of our former pilot, and determined, in the fifteen or twenty miles of steep mountain roadway that remained, to re-establish the prestige of the motor-agency. It was a terrifying drive. The tall, careening White truck, hurtled down and around curves where, had the brakes not held or the steering-gear wabbled, we should simply have dived off into the blue. Once the breakneck pace was stopped to take on the running-board an enormous turkey—"*chompipé*" as the Guatemaltecos say—consigned by some of his wayside acquaintances to other friends of his in the capital. A moment later, the poor bird quite forgotten by this time, there was a blast of cold wind, and on its heels, the afternoon deluge. Thunder volleyed, the ditch beside the road became a river, and all the time the unhappy gobbler, legs tied and helpless, had to face it. . . .

The rain stopped as quickly as it came. Everybody seemed to know the motor-bus and its driver, and people grinned and waved under their dripping eaves, as

we thundered by. The air was cool, with a high-level tang and thinness, and one got the impression of a healthy upland type, and here along the highway, at least, of a certain cheerfulness and prosperity. We hurtled through a villa region, past a park, statues, with a certain European air, then into a long street with blinking electric signs, and so into the town which used to be the seat of the Spanish Captains-General and is still the largest city in Central America.

GUATEMALA

CHAPTER VIII

GUATEMALA

I

When old Don Estrada Cabrera was ruler of Guatemala—from 1899 to 1920, that is to say—and building Greek temples to Minerva with one hand while squashing free speech and all resistance to his dictatorship with the other, a plaster relief-map of the country was built in the race-track grounds on the outskirts of the capital.

All the volcanoes, and the rivers that flow down their sides, coast towns, highland villages, and mountain lakes, are there, and the whole suggests a sort of pincushion, or a bit of cave-floor covered with sharp stylagmites. The height and sharpness of the peaks is exaggerated, in order to get them all in, but otherwise the scale is accurate, and the whole gives a pretty picture of just what these up-and-down lands are like.

Guatemala is bigger than any of the other republics with the exception of Nicaragua; she has about forty per cent of the total population of the Isthmus; more trade than any of the others; and although less "grown-up" than Costa Rica and Salvador, the force she has been able to exert, through a comparatively strong central government backed by a considerable army, has given her a good deal of influence throughout Central America.

The face of the country is on a rather wilder, grander scale than that of its neighbors. Mountains incline to be higher, valleys deeper and steeper. In Guatemala City,

and in Quezaltenango, the second city, one is distinctly conscious of being up in the air. Winds come swooping down from the peaks, and even in midsummer it is cool, and occasionally almost cold at night. What may roughly be called the central plateau, on which the capital and most of the older towns are built, is one of the beautiful valleys of the world. The occasional foreigner who gets as far from the usual trail as Lake Atitlan, in western Guatemala, and looks down on that crater lake with its border of volcanic peaks, is not likely to forget it, and the day will doubtless come when people will travel thither for their vacations as nowadays they go to Switzerland.

More than half the population is pure Indian. There are Indian villages all through the highland country that live their own life except in so far as their boys may be drafted for the army or their able-bodied go down to the lowlands, as contract-laborers, from time to time, to work on the coffee or sugar plantations. And the presence of this alien and more or less submerged brown mass, sad, sodden sometimes, but made of solid, resisting stock, which cherishes one knows not what memories of the greater days of its Maya and Quiché ancestors, gives to Guatemala a color and a note of latent tragedy different from anything found in the other republics.

The vaguely sinister air of the country was more noticeable in the days of Cabrera than now. Cabrera's tyrannies, his alleged floggings, evictions, arrests, forced loans, used to be one of the stand-bys of our Sunday-supplement editors. In 1907 a bomb was exploded under his carriage. In 1908 his own guard of honor nearly got him. He was just about to receive the American

Minister, Mr. Heimke, at that time, when the national flag, which one of his cadet guard was holding, was thrown across his face and the shooting began. Cabrera was hit in the hand and fell, but he was not seriously hurt, and the cadets accused of being involved in the plot were taken out and shot. Several were said to have been guiltless, and I remember being told on my first visit to Guatemala, just before the War, of a mother who had taken a younger brother out to the cemetery where they were burying her dead son and had the little boy dip his fingers in the blood dripping from the executioner's cart and swear vengeance.

How romantic such tales may be, I know not, but they were the sort of thing constantly whispered into the traveller's ears in those days. I recall being warned, before leaving New York, then, never to discuss politics while in Guatemala. Spies were said to be, and doubtless were, everywhere. And the thought of putting mysterious forces in motion, of eyes peering through the flowers on the hotel wallpaper, of secret police suddenly materializing at some careless word, was so intriguing, that I was a good deal disappointed when nothing happened.

Indeed, about the only example of the Government's long arm that I ran across then, was in the southwestern villagef of Patulul, where on going to the *commissionado* or local executive, to ask about mules, he looked at a telegram lying on his desk and said, "O yes. You came down from Guatemala on this morning's train!" and then explained that about twenty telegrams were sent into or out of that remote little village every day merely to keep the police informed as to who was moving about and where!

Don Estrada fell in 1920, and the stranger enters now into quite another air. The old secret police are no longer apparent, there is freedom of the press, and one gets the notion that unless some specially "strong" man were to arise, or some unexpected emergency threaten the country, days like Cabrera's would be hard to bring back again.

The earthquake of 1917 destroyed much of Cabrera's capital—I could scarcely find a reminder of the plaza in which I had watched a celebration of the Guatemalan Independence Day and seen the Dictator himself—and the new city, which has somewhat over 100,000 inhabitants, is a characteristic jumble of Spanish America and some Kansas or Colorado county-seat.

There is a modern hotel, with a lobby full of easy chairs; with page-boys, switchboard-operator, and even a "Tourist's Shop" with its Indian embroidery and Guatemalan antiquities. Once in its lobby, you might never know you had left Des Moines or Denver. The newspapers become more and more like American papers, taxicabs are displacing the old horse carriages, and American films appear only slightly after their appearance in the States. The Eucharistic Congress, "The Big Parade," and "Brown of Harvard" were among those shown while I was in town, and walking along the main street, one saw wrinkled old Indian women, perhaps with a papoose hanging in the loop of a homespun *guipile* from their backs, staring wistfully, with heaven knows what thoughts, at brightly lighted shop-windows full of simpering wax manikins and pink silk lingerie.

There was even, on the main plaza, a glittering new building crowded with all the American electric appli-

ances—electric toasters, washing-machines, vacuum-cleaners, and kitchen-ranges—that are found in similar shops at home. In short the same process is going on here as elsewhere in Central America, and as Guatemala has many foreigners and is only three days from New Orleans, it may, possibly, proceed faster here than in some of the other countries.

They were making a great fuss while I was in the capital over a rather elaborate Spanish revue which was touring Mexico and the Isthmus. There was a runway from the stage down into the orchestra and the coryphees promenaded out and back again. Two peasant children, somewhat in the Mytyl and Tytyl style, would tell their fairy godmother what they wanted most of all for supper. Oranges, for instance: whereupon, the lights went down and the backdrop rose on a scene in Valencia, with the soubrette and chorus dressed in pannier skirts hung with oranges, and everybody singing about love amongst the orange-blossoms, and tossing real oranges out to the audience at the end.

After oranges came bananas, and the soubrette appeared this time in a sort of hula-hula skirt made of bananas, which she picked off—enchanting gesture!—until almost nothing was left, and threw to the gay dogs in the orchestra. The high spot of the evening was reached when the entire chorus came out on the runway to lean over and paint one after another of the spectators with their lip-sticks. Tremendous hilarity on all sides! Between the acts, little Indian boys peddled American chewing-gum and chocolates— "*chicles y chocolátes!*"—and the papers carried cartoons of the principals and very literary feuilletons appraising their personal charms and artistic gifts. . . . Thus the stage,

in the city once the seat of the Spanish Viceroy and the Inquisition, which proudly called itself the "very noble and very loyal Ciudad de Santiago de los Caballeros!"

Against this background, past the motors and modern shops, patter quickly, always hurrying, the sombre, silent shades of the world that was. There are still Indian villages within tramping distance of the capital, and there are almost always Indians in sight on the streets. Their faces are sometimes curiously Oriental, and the tight skirts of the women, held up by a broad sash or girdle suggest Japan or southeastern Asia. Baskets or bundles on their heads, babies on their backs, arms stiffly swinging, these women shuffle rapidly down the country roads or along the city sidewalks, scarce lifting their eyes. Their short, sleeveless, poncho-like waists, or *guipiles*, each embroidered after the style of its particular village or tribe, are done in red on white homespun, generally, or in flaming mixtures of red and yellow, and always interesting, often beautiful, they give the Guatemalan scene a color not found in any of the other republics.

II

The "real" Guatemala, like the "real" country everywhere in Central America, is outside the capital—on coffee fincas, and sugar and banana plantations, up in the Indian villages and amongst the tremendous western valleys and mountains—and whenever the clouds permit, you catch a whiff of it from the balconies or upper windows of the town in the great dead cones of Agua and Fuego—Fire and Water—and the other peaks, rising against the southwestern horizon, clear and cool in the early morning or smouldering against the sunset.

It was down from Agua, in 1541, that a flood of water poured at night, during a frightful earthquake, and overwhelmed the original capital which Don Pedro de Alvarado, conqueror of the country, planted at its base. Six hundred people were killed then, among them the conqueror's wife, Doña Beatriz de la Cueva, and the "twenty damsels of gentle lineage, daughters of gentlemen of the Spanish court" whom Doña Beatriz had brought out with her from Spain.

The city was rebuilt about a league away. It grew rapidly, had several monastic orders, the palaces of the Archbishop, Auntimiento, University and Seminary, and many churches. For more than 200 years it was the political, religious, and commercial centre of what is now Central America and, next to Mexico City, the largest town in the two Americas.

Then, in 1773, came the great catastrophe. All through May and June the earth grumbled, and on the afternoon of July 29 its gathered forces broke loose. Trees were pulled up by the roots, roofs shaken down, the church bells clanged as if ringing their own ruin. All that night, with horses loose, dogs barking, people confessing their sins, the shocks continued and with them a deluge of rain. The city was destroyed and its site was changed again. The present city, begun in 1776, was terrifically shaken in 1917 and over 2,000 persons were said to have lost their lives.

It recovered quickly—the one and two-story houses are not hard to replace—and doubtless engineers will find some sort of reinforced-concrete construction with which even larger buildings may withstand such shocks. Meanwhile, and as long as the ruins of the old capital, now known as "Antigua," remain in anything like their

present state of preservation, they will stand as a monument to the spacious old colonial days, when Guatemala was an outpost of imperial Spain, and reproduced in the New World something of the mellow air and dignity of the Old. "Mother without sons," as a Guatemalan writer describes the old town, "Niobe of cities. . . ."

A more beautiful site for a city would be hard to find. The gigantic but perfectly proportioned cone of Agua, a soft dark green clear to its summit, lifts its close to 13,000 feet from the outskirts of the town. There are no foot-hills to blur its line or to dwarf its height. The broad, sheltered valley, with its springlike airs and the Pensativa River flowing through it, spreads out fanwise from the feet of the volcano. The roofs of coffee fincas shine out here and there above the verdure of the upper levels. The spacious scene, the caressing climate, less windy and a trifle warmer than the actual capital; the clean, cool river, warm springs, the possibility of getting easily the products of both temperate and tropic zones—but for the occasional menace of the under earth, it is ideal enough.

A four-horse diligence used to drive out of Guatemala City at sunup, and set you down in Antiqua in the early afternoon; one goes across by motor now, in about an hour. There are several comfortable pensions, and with the ruins to poke about in, the volcano to climb, and quiet all about, there are many worse places in which to spend a few idle winter weeks. The volcano, which is all but impossible to climb in the rainy season, stands out dry and clear then most of the time, and "climbing" is merely a matter of getting a horse, and riding up.

Somebody once said of Mexico that "the Germans

RUINS AT ANTIGUA, THE COLONIAL CAPITAL OF GUATEMALA, ONCE THE SECOND CITY OF THE WESTERN CONTINENT.

own the hardware stores, the Spaniards own the hotels, the Americans own the railroads, and the Mexicans themselves stand in the middle of the street, and shout *'Viva Méjico!' . . .*"

Somewhat the same might be said of Guatemala, although the Guatemaltecos are less politically conscious of it. Its railroads are American-owned, and form a link in the International Railway line which is expected one day to run all the way from the Mexican border to the Panama Canal. The larger bankers are American or German, the banana industry of the East Coast is in the hands of the United Fruit Company, and coffee raising and exporting, the country's most important enterprise, is largely in the hands of Germans. There are Germans enough, for example, to keep up a commodious German Club in the capital, over which, when occasion calls for colors, the members, after the fashion of German colonials, fly the old imperial *schwartz-weiss-rot* rather that the black-red-gold republican flag.

The mountain sides and lowlands which slope down to the Pacific from the continental divide are the most fertile and densely populated part of the country, and might be called the "real" Guatemala in almost the same sense that the "real" Costa Rica is found in the Meseta Central. There is sugar in the lowlands and coffee in the highlands, clear up to five thousand feet, and cold nights.

The down train for the Pacific, which leaves the capital at early breakfast time, and carries passengers for the ports of San José, Champerico, and the stations in between, along the valley running from Escuintla Junction up to the Mexican border, is always sprinkled with

prosperous-looking *finqueros* or their managers—tanned, out-of-door men, in riding-clothes, who have been attending to the business end of their affairs in the capital, and are now returning to their plantations. They are likely to know each other, they travel light, with nothing much, generally, but a brace of leather saddlebags and a pistol in a belt, and they gossip genially with the assured air of those who know that they have a solid business behind them, and somewhere down the line a grinning and respectful *mozo* waiting under a tree beside the little station with saddle-mules and slickers ready for the climb up into the hills.

The drop from the plateau to the hot country is like the drop from a table to the carpet, and as the train, winding down in great loops, approaches the "edge," so to speak, you can see the lowlands spreading out under their drowsy, golden haze, far below, until they vanish in the misty blue of the Pacific floor. It is almost like riding in an airplane. At Escuintla, definitely in the hot country, the road divides, one line running directly south to San José, the other swinging west toward Mexico. This east-and-west spur, running through Mazatenango, taps the most highly cultivated part of Guatemala, and nearly every station is the jumping-off place for sugar, cattle or coffee plantations.

It was down this way that I went one morning, with a Belgian *mandador,* to visit the big American coffee finca of "El Pacayal," in the highlands not far from the crater-lake of Atitlan. The owner, Mr. D. S. Hodgson, is another of those Central American old-timers, like the Englishmen, Vaughn, of Nicaragua, and Hill, of Salvador, whose coffee fincas have already been mentioned, but Hodgson began his career in Guatemala

ANTIGUA, THE ANCIENT CAPITAL, AS IT IS TO-DAY, AT THE FOOT OF THE VOLCANO OF AGUA (WATER) WHICH DESTROYED THE OLD CITY.

as a railroader and had only recently given that up completely for the life of a *finquero*. He knew the country as only one could who had been mixed up with its politics and big business, on the one hand, and had had long experience, on the other, with handling laborers, both for the railroad and on his own plantation. His English was mixed with Spanish, and his fluent and colloquial Spanish, adapted to hobnobbing with a President or bawling out a section-gang, was spoken with an American accent and inflection, and, quite at home in his exotic scene, he was doubtless in essentials the same inalterable Yankee who had come down to the tropics some 38 years before.

He had known Cabrera well, and as we gossiped in his Guatemala office before I started for "El Pacayal" he spoke of the manner in which American journals were wont to handle the "Old Man."

"Ever know a chap named 'Emerson'? . . . He came down here once and wanted me to help him get an interview with the president. Well, I introduced him, and he had his talk, and about three months afterward in comes a copy of *Harper's Weekly* with the article. 'A Tyrant at Close Range' was the title, and they'd made a big picture of Don Estrada with his face behind prison bars! Of course that made *me* popular! . . ."

Labor was not so troublesome in Guatemala, he thought, if a man attended to the details himself. He worked his own on the usual "task" system—the Indians came down from their villages for 20 "tasks" generally, or for a series of such 20 tasks. They got food, and lodging, and about 33 1-3 cents gold a day. Taking the year through, labor cost him about 50 cents a day for everything. He thought the custom of giving

the laborers advance payments and thus having a debt with which to hold them was necessary, conditions and habits being what they were. Certainly conditions were "backward," but he doubted that the *peons* were as downtrodden as many believed. There were not many "hard" bosses, and those who were such soon got known and avoided. The Indians were "wiser," he thought, than many people fancied.

The train bowled down the western roof of Guatemala, past Agua volcano and Lake Amatitlan, sulphurously steaming along its shores (and not to be confused with the larger and more majestic Atitlan, farther westward), past Escuintla and its superlative mangoes, and on to the station of Patulul. It was here that I got off in '13 for the mule trip up to Atitlan. This time a jitney car took us through and beyond the village to a little settlement where a *mozo* and mules were waiting.

The *mozo* put my bag on a board across the pommel of his saddle, the *mandador* and I set out in the lead, and down came the afternoon's deluge! It was a three hours' climb to "El Pacayal," it poured cats and dogs for all but the last half-hour of the climb, and much of the earlier part was over a trail which would have been regarded at home as little more than a boulder-strewn watercourse. And yet everything that came or went to and from this large, and even elaborate, mountain plantation had to be lugged on mule-back or by bullock-cart!

The rain beats through almost anything on a trip like this, and what the rain doesn't do is completed by the sweat that gathers under air-tight rain-coats and slickers. But the mules were good; at a German neighbor's, about three-quarters of the way up, we shifted

to fresh horses, and so travelled comfortably enough. The poor *mozo*, lugging the baggage under a tarpaulin, was left far behind. The fresh horse was an object-lesson in the superiority of mules for this sort of work. The steeper the going, the harder he drove himself. He was in a lather after the first half-hour, and for last few miles tired out. A horse is both too sensitive and high-strung and too clumsy for the plodding, pains-taking job of picking a path between the boulders of steep and slippery mountain trails. A mule has a lighter touch, and is more patient, clever, and philosophical. There is pleasure, in such circumstances, merely in watching a good mule work.

What with the rain, and the rough going, I had not bothered with the view, but at a certain turn in the trail, not far from the plantation, the *mandador* stopped, and said "Look!"

The rain, meanwhile, had all but ceased. The cordillera was shaking off its gray cloak, and there, across a breath-taking chasm of verdure-covered valley, rose the cone of Atitlan. There were no foot-hills nor intervening shoulders. It was like looking from the roof of a 20-story building at the façade of a 50-story sky-scraper, directly across the street. One didn't look *away*, but very definitely *up!* Green to the very top of its nearly 12,000 feet, with the verdant abyss in between, is lifted there in the silence, rain-washed, and seemingly as untouched and untarnished as in some dawn of creation.

Up here, on the shoulders of a cluster of ridges that rose to round about the five-thousand-foot level, lay "El Pacayal." The plantation proper, 50 cabelleros, or about 5,000 acres, of trees, was broken by a series of

twisted valleys, and they, in turn, were separated by deeper valleys from the country round. The offices and coffee-cleaning mill, work-people's quarters, and the villas of the owner and his manager, made a sizable little village. Some 280 families, about 1,000 workers, lived on the estate the year round. In addition to these *colonos*, some 2,000 casuals, known as *temporadistas* or *jornaleros*, from the temporary nature of their work, or as *quadrilleros*, from the square bits of ground, the clearing of which of weeds constituted a "task," were distributed through the year of cultivating and picking.

The *colonos* lived in one-room huts, some built with concrete walls, set in long rows down the sides of several wide streets. The casuals bunked, several together, in similar shelters. There was a commissary where the work-people could buy additions to their regular rations of corn and beans. The houses of the owner and his manager, fenced off with their gardens and walks from the rest, had all the comforts, and were about what is found on our own larger California or Oregon fruit "ranches."

Really living and working on his place, as he would at any other business, instead of following the common absentee-landlord habit of Central America, the owner had made a real home for himself and his wife and family, where they could be comfortable the year round, if need be, and entertain pleasantly their occasional guests. He had his own electric-light plant and water-system, and had laboriously lugged up from the lowlands everything needed to furnish the place, from armchairs and bridge-tables to Victrola and a piano. With a really big business to superintend, a healthy climate, beautiful views and rides in every direction, he

had everything—except the society of his own kind—to make up the spacious life of a country gentleman.

As the family were in Guatemala City at the moment, I had the whole house to rattle round in, and dined alone in state, when not visiting the *mandador* and his wife in their similarly comfortable house a stone's throw away.

Next morning dawned as bright and freshly washed as tropical mornings usually are in the rainy season. Horses were brought round, and for the better part of the whole morning we rode up and down and around the miles of velvety trails under the shade-trees that shielded the coffee. The green berries were already nearly full-grown, with here and there a few turning red, and every little way we passed men and women busily finishing their "tasks" of weed-clearing for the day. Few of them, the *mandador* said, worked more than four or five hours, and when their bit was done cultivated their own vegetable plots or did nothing.

The *colonos* received 1½ arrobas, or about 37 pounds, of grain each week for a man and his wife. Their children, if they worked, received 15 pounds of corn, and 12 pounds if they didn't work. The workers also got their quarters, medicines when needed, land for their gardens, and were paid 15 pesos (about 25 cents) for the ordinary "task" of cleaning, and 20 pesos for a similar amount of picking coffee into boxes. The casual laborers got the same pay, 3 pounds of corn daily, 1 pound of beans each week, half a pound of salt, chile for flavoring, and coffee. The wife or the woman who cooked for each group of casuals received 1½ pesos daily for that work. During the picking season the usual day's "task" was 125 pounds.

The plantation produced from 12,000 to 15,000 quintals, or from 1,200,000 to 1,500,000 pounds of coffee. The current price was about 24 cents a pound and the *mandador's* notion was that they cleared about 10 cents on the pound.

III

Because of its large population of Indians who have withstood, thus far, the contagion of the white man's habits of work and living, the labor problem in Guatemala is rather different from that in the other republics. The Indians, who live mostly in the highlands, are compelled to work for wages from time to time, because they cannot make a living in the bleak upper country. They do not relish regular wage-labor, however; they cannot endure the hot country for any length of time, and as a result they come and go as necessity drives them, or as they are induced to come, in one way or another, by the professional labor contractors or the planters themselves or their agents.

Several causes explain the persistence in Guatemala of a large and distinct population of aborigines. At the time of the conquest, the Indians in what is now Guatemala were too many, too well-organized, and too civilized to be easily killed, driven off, or enslaved. Under the *encomienda* system they were compelled to work in return for the supposed benefits conferred by instruction in the Christian religion, but they were also citizens like anybody else, and seem to have been treated better nearer the capital than in the outlying provinces. After the *encomiendas* were abolished, the Indians were still subjected to a kind of shanghaiing, under the *manda-*

mientos, which permitted the local authorities forcibly to recruit laborers and send them wherever they might be needed. The labor law of 1894 was supposed to do away with the *mandamiento* system. Under it distinction is made between the *colonos*, who live permanently on the plantation, and the casual laborers who come down from their mountain villages on contract. The real "teeth" in the present arrangement lie in the custom of getting the casual into debt before he leaves his village, and thus having a hold over him which the planter can call the local police to enforce.

The system is mediæval, and hard both on the Indian, who has no understanding of the uses of money or the habit of saving it, and on the planter who, with large amounts of capital tied up in his coffee, needs some dependable supply of labor. There is sometimes a five or six days' hard tramp over mountain trails between the Indian's highland home and the plantation on which he works. He wants to do as little and get away as soon as possible, while the *finquero* is always in the dilemma of either having a lot of cash tied up in loans or of having no handle by which he can control his workmen. The situation resembles that which commonly results in any industrialization of the tropics. Two ways of life are in conflict, and assuming that large-scale coffee-growing continues, it is not easy to see what can be done to reconcile them until the Indian is brought to accept more readily the white man's attitude toward wages and work.

A vivid little picture of the mingled childishness and tragedy of the Indian's lot was acted for us that morning, as the *mandador* and I were inviting our souls over a whiskey-and-soda on the veranda of his cottage be-

fore sitting down to luncheon. Hat in hand, humble and apologetic as whipped dogs, a little procession of laborers came shuffling into our august presence, each begging, with his own particular excuse, to be permitted to go back to his village.

All were men of middle age, one or two even old fellows, and all had the gnarled, seasoned look of ancient plough-horses or oxen. One said he was ill, one that his wife was ill, there were various excuses; the real reason, the *mandador* said, was that they wanted to get back home for some approaching saint's fiesta. In any case, he had one answer for all.

"Let's see your book!" he said. Each man had a little book, in which was written down the sums borrowed from the finca, and also a card on which was punched the number of "tasks" he had done. When there was no remote balance between the two, the manager pointed out that fact and said that leaving now was impossible.

One hard-fisted old fellow, who looked as if he might have tramped tens of thousands of miles over mountain trails in his day, had a debt of 4,500 pesos! That is to say, he would have to pay back to the plantation the wages from some 200 to 300 "tasks"—nearly a year's work—before he could keep anything for himself!

How was such a debt ever permitted to pile up? Plainly, working as a casual, for a few weeks or months a year, the man would never pay it off. He would either stay on the plantation more or less permanently, or run away if he had a chance. On the other hand, loans even much smaller than this, if commonly made and with laborers numbering many hundreds, must soon run up into a serious liability.

The *mandador* dismissed each, as if he were talking with children, pointing out the impossibility of letting them off, and telling them to come and see him another time. The men, mumbling their requests in an almost inaudible voice, as the "souls" on some Russian estate in the pre-emancipation days may have sought an audience with their master, listened respectfully, and then generally repeated their requests in an even more abject tone, as if nothing had been said. When one, in the same grave, unhurried way, got down on his knees, the whole picture we made—the two Olympians lolling in their chairs, tapping their boots with their riding-whips, the descendants of the original proprietors of the land prostrating themselves before us—became so much like some Bolshevik cartoon, that one of us, at least, began to feel uncomfortable.

And yet, things being as they were, what else, precisely, could the *mandador* do? Seventy-five dollars of his employer's money was tied up in that kneeling figure, and he was one of hundreds in a more or less similar situation. If the laborer were to go back to his mountains, who could say—illness and death apart—when they might be able to get him back again?

We lunched together after that, the Belgian *mandador*, his German-Polish wife, and myself, in a room that somehow recalled Europe, as did the wine, and some of the dishes, and a certain air of snugness and *gemüthlichkeit*. And that evening, when the rain was falling gently outside, over the coffee and all those trackless and silent leagues of tangled mountain country, we got together again in their equally snug upstairs living-room and played "Russian Bank," with which double-solitaire game the *mandador* and his wife amused themselves night after night.

Madame snuffed constantly, between her placid smiles, and said that the dampness or altitude or something gave her a sort of perennial hay-fever. What a place for a woman, anyway, she sighed comfortably! No neighbors, nothing to do, nobody to talk to—heigh ho . . . ! And the little *mestizo* maid tripped silently in with her pitcher of warm water, a night-light, and some magazines. . . .

We were off at dawn next day for Patulul, the mules fresh and willing, the going good, the mountains, which had been hidden on the up trip, now spread out in all their sunup freshness and grandeur. It was like May in the Berkshires as we started, like July in Times Square when we reached Patulul. The village was crowded with Sunday market folk now, the Indian women in their bright *guipiles*, with other homespun waists and blankets and scarfs to sell, while a boy, pounding a drum and leading a calf, decorated with colored tissue-paper streamers, droned through the crowd, advertising a circus that was to show there that afternoon.

Again I picked up the train from the capital, and rode on down to Mazatenango, partly to run up to the old highland city of Quezaltenango, partly to visit the lowland coffee plantation of "El Chitalon." Friends in the capital had notified the German manager, and he was on hand to take me in tow, as the train rolled in just ahead of the rain.

Fahr was one of those cheerful, capable young argonauts who understands everything at once, settles all the stranger's problems and unties all his knots, and, five minutes after you have first seen his intelligent grin, seems an old friend. The son of a well-to-do Hamburg exporter (and the Hamburg Germans are

born with one foot overseas) he had come out to Guatemala, made a competence and lost it during the War, and spent four years interned at Halifax, working as a farm-laborer with Canadians. His own plantation gone, he had tried, after the War, various jobs in the States and in Mexico, married an American girl, and now, in his second youth, was working as a *mandador* until he could get his own foothold again.

Before driving out to his plantation, a short distance from Mazatenango, we picked up two young Germans who ran a general store—the sort of patient, methodical tropical pioneers (there is no equivalent American type) who go to Spanish America, not as temporary resident-agents for some big company, but on their own, as merchants, with the intention of digging in, marrying into some native family, very likely, and really growing up with the country.

Their store, in the inner patio of which, while the rain crashed down on the tiles overhead, we paused for a drink, was a museum of anything and everything that could be sold. There was farm machinery and blankets, wines and preserves. There were deerskins going to Germany to be turned into gloves, and bales of newspapers from San Francisco sold locally for wrapping-paper. Some of the latter, the boys said, had come down almost as promptly as if they had been subscribed for, which was quite an advantage in a remote Guatemalan town, and they went mostly to the Chinese merchants whose shops are scattered all through the Guatemalan mountains.

The two Germans and I drove out through the rain —Fahr sticking to his horse—to "El Chitalon," and found ourselves welcomed to the long, second-story

veranda which served as the open-air living-room of a spacious, rambling home that suggested the "great house" on the less pretentious sort of old-fashioned Southern plantation. There was a library-table, books, and easy chairs here, and the other rooms opened off it like staterooms from a steamer's deck. It was a farm-house rather than the owner's villa, as at "El Pacayal," and had the air of having been long and simply but comfortably lived in. Dinner that evening, with the rain still pouring a waterfall from the veranda eaves, and the two amusing guests from town to help keep the talk going, was jolly and snug enough, and nearly everything we had came, as it ought to come on a farm, from the finca itself.

There was lots of milk and cream—generally a luxury in Central America, what with the lack of ice, the dirtiness of native milkmen, and the habit of boiling the milk before it is used; there was honey from their own hives, their own sugar, fruit, and coffee, and delicious tomales, wrapped in corn-husks, and *tortillas*. We gossiped on the veranda until the rain ceased and the guests had started home, and then, drowsy enough after my early-morning start from "El Pacayal," I drifted off to sleep to the pleasant sound of water rushing through the flume from Fahr's power-plant that ran just under my window.

Fahr was up at five, and had got the business of the day going before I was ready for breakfast. He usually got off his correspondence at this hour, he said, while the air was cool and he was fresh; saw his work-people well started, and came in for a six-o'clock breakfast. After coffee saddle-horses were brought round, and we started riding through the coffee. It was as different a

world as could be from that of the night before, and over to the northward the cone of Santa Maria volcano, which lay between us and Quezaltenango, stood out sharply against the morning sky.

"El Chitalon" was about as far down as coffee grows —only about 1,000 feet above the Pacific, which lay some thirty miles to the southward—but if less valuable as coffee country, it was level and easily cultivated, right on the railroad, and there was a chance for sugar, corn, and cattle. They had about 2,000 acres, Fahr said, 175 families of *colonos* and from 600 to 700 families in picking-time. The *colonos* got their living-quarters, grain and salt, from half to three-quarters of an acre per family for a garden. Meat and fats they had to find for themselves. At Easter all of them got a small present in the shape of a check on the Chinese store in Mazatenango.

He had labor agents in the highlands, like most *finqueros*, but being an active sort, accustomed to having his own finger on everything, he generally rode up into the Indian country himself when the time came to hire laborers. There were villages so inaccessible, he said, that even a horse had difficulty in getting to them, and one could sometimes take a short cut down an Indian footpath to places that it would take a day or two to get to by the road.

He seemed to take more thought for the Indian's side than most *finqueros*. He was against the debt system and did what he could to get his work-people out of it. He paid those who were out of debt to the plantation 20 instead of 15 pesos a day—about 33 cents instead of 25—saved them the usual labor agent's commission when he hired them himself, and had tried to

interest some of his friends in a scheme for giving the Indians land in their own highlands (where the *finqueros* often had large idle tracts) and letting them pay for it, gradually, by work in the coffee.

He had talked with Indians who had been attracted by the notion of breaking up the large estates, but when told that nationalization of land might mean that their plots would also be taken and divided, they shook their heads and said "*No sirve*—that's no good." Certainly the highland Indians were genuinely land-hungry. When they did get a deed to a bit of land they put it with the images of their saints and prayed for it with the rest.

The coffee crop of "El Chitalon" was between four and six thousand quintals in a good year. On paper, the finca brought in an income of between $40,000 and $60,000 a year, but it had had a checkered life, nevertheless. One native owner had run into debt and committed suicide. The place was finally taken over by a firm of American bankers on mortgage foreclosure, and Fahr was running it in their interest.

Over behind the lazily active volcano of Santa Maria which we could see that morning from "El Chitalon" and several thousand feet higher up, lies the old Indian town of Quezaltenango. Known in ancient days as Xelahuh, it was the second city of the Quichés as it is of the Guatemala of to-day. It is a place rather more interesting for what it was than is, and for the country through which one must go to get there. But the remoteness which long gave it a certain charm has been broken by the automobile, and in the dry season one can run up to it from Mazatenango in half a day, that is to say, leave the capital in the morning and reach Quezal-

tenango early that night. But the sort of rains through which we had ridden to "El Pacayal" had already made parts of the mountain road impassable, and even now, with the sun shining and at least half a day of clear weather ahead, getting through was a gamble.

Nevertheless the chance seemed worth taking, and after Fahr had taken me back to town and said good-by, we bowled out of Mazatenango cheerily enough. In the car was the son of a well-to-do Guatemalteco cattle and flour merchant, who had also been visiting the Fahrs, a Syrian or Armenian merchant and his fuzzy-haired little girl, an ancient and very religious Guatemalteco carpenter carrying his box of tools, and a smiling Indian youth giving himself the luxury of a ride up into the hills.

We had scarcely proceeded half an hour when we came to an illustration of what the rains can do, almost overnight, to these unsurfaced mountain roads—a sort of sink-hole, perhaps a hundred yards across, in and on either end of which lay a dozen stalled motor-trucks and passenger-cars. One or two of the latter, with bedraggled passengers who had come down from the capital on the same train with me, had started the evening before and been stuck there all night.

Boards, fence-posts, branches, bamboo poles, banana-leaves, whatever the drivers could lay their hands on, had been thrown into the morass, without much effect. Oxen, when they can be got, are the best answer to such riddles, generally, and after a long wait and much fussing, two of these patient and amazingly powerful animals, with the motor thundering, car skidding and bucking like a live thing behind them, contrived to break the deadlock and drag us through. A slim, sardonic

young man in riding-clothes, plastered with mud, apparently the Spanish manager of the automobile company, was all over the place with orders and suggestions, and as we finally floundered out to dry land waved a good-by as he hummed ironically *"La vida es un sueño, Patrón! . . ."*

But this sink-hole was only one of several along what, in the dry season, was a good enough mountain road. As we climbed higher into the mountains, we passed, every now and again, places where the steep bank above us had suddenly crumbled and flung tons of brown-sugar earth, boulders, and even uprooted trees across what a moment before was the road. There were blowouts and other breaks, we wasted two hours at a roadside inn waiting for a down truck to turn up with spare tires, while our genial half-breed chauffeur consumed enormous quantities of *tortillas* and fried eggs and amused himself by dancing a *pas seul* to the phonograph's "Valencia." And finally, after several hours of rain and in pitchy darkness, we broke down for good, alongside a mired truck, somewhere in the upper mountains.

The young Guatemalteco flour and cattle merchant and I started on ahead through the mud, hoping to find a settlement and a bit to eat, and as we stumbled upward were overtaken by a lone horseman, enveloped in a long slicker, and proceeding placidly, as cheerful as you please.

He, too, was a cattleman, and the two fell into a lazy shop-talk, on cattle, prices, markets, grazing country, and other gossip of their day's work. The rain was nothing to him, nor to his excellent horse. He had left that day at an hour that pleased him and he would ride

peacefully on to a convenient sleeping-place, regardless of the weather, which, after all, was an essential part of the natural scheme of things, as our elaborate and tricky machines were not. There was a touch of condescension in his voice as he spoke of his good mount, and even the horse himself seemed to carry his rider with a certain conscious pride as if he felt that we were interlopers in these pastoral mountains.

It was one of those moments, like those in which, as you are lolling ignominiously in several thousand dollars' worth of useless automobile, a little file of barefoot Indian burden-carriers go pattering silently by, when you begin to doubt the virtue of machines and a good many of our age's values.

These Indian burden-carriers had been passing us all that dreary afternoon. They had nothing but their tough and efficient bodies and a few wisps of clothes. Some had not even a woollen poncho, but had simply ripped off a banana-leaf a foot-and-a-half wide and six feet long and, holding it over their backs, shield-fashion, pushed on, regardless. Sometimes it would be a whole family, even the little children, with their faces like Japanese dolls, carrying burdens suited to their size, and balancing over their backs child's size banana-leaves. *Poco à poco*, as they say, little by little, and when night comes they curl up under some wayside veranda, warm their *tortillas* and boil a little coffee, and sleep till dawn.

All things, the tropical mountain trail included, have a certain natural rhythm, and the burden-carriers shuffling silently along under the rain, strings of pack-mules going up the trail with the steady creak-creak of pack-ropes and leather, our lone horseman jogging

placidly along at the easy but surprisingly rapid half-walk, fitted into that rhythm and made a part of it. The very Spanish words the two cattlemen spoke smelled of leather and lassos and horses and steers. Just what had our words and our machinery, our hurry and noise, to do with this tropical mountain world? Did the old Spanish way, the ecclesiastical-patriarchal scheme of life, perhaps fit it better? Had we any really important business, that is to say, spiritual business, here?

As that lone horseman overtook us, chatted for a time and then, pushing on, was swallowed up by the dark, it seemed as if the souls of two civilizations had met there in the blackness of the Guatemalan road, and that somehow or other ours belonged somewhere else.

In the midst of these somewhat mystical dreams, a dim light appeared ahead, and we came presently to a roadside hut. A *mestizo* woman and her three little children; dogs, cats, rabbits, a sheep or two, and a pig were in or about the place and two calves were tethered under the low porch roof. Inside, a tiny fire flickered on a raised adobe hearth, and a kerosene-lamp threw a pale light over the crowded little home, over another young woman, half seen in the shadows, nursing a baby, and through a thick odor of smoke, manure, animals and humans, all hemmed in by the blackness and rain.

Good evening, *Señora!* and might we, perhaps, get a bite of something to eat? Good evening, *Señores*, but unhappily you can't! Not a drop of coffee, a *tortilla*, or a bean, apparently, in the house! Milk there might be, however, provided one could extract it from the cow, now tied to a tree outside. So the woman first untied the calf and let him gallop over to its mother and start feeding, then dragged off the protesting bait, and ere

the mother could recover from her surprise, hastily milked two foaming glasses, and the deed was done.

Meanwhile the rescue-car came drumming down the road. It ran on to pick up the others, gathered us in on the way back, and we got to a German hotel in Quezaltenango in time for some beer and sandwiches before turning in, in a room with enormous gilt-framed mirrors—evidently the building had once been a private house—and air so cold that we needed two blankets and our overcoats on top of that.

IV

"We were again on classic soil!" wrote the redoubtable John L. Stephens, in 1844, in that book of Central American travel which is in itself a classic. Stephens, who was then Minister of the United States to the Central American Federation and hunting for a legitimate government to which to present his credentials, meant that he had arrived at the site of the ancient city of Xelahuh, second city of the Quiché "empire" and said, by the Spanish chroniclers, to have had more than 300,000 inhabitants. According to the story, the populace fled to the near-by volcanoes when the Spanish conqueror, Alvarado, took their town, but returned after several of their chiefs were captured and declared themselves ready to embrace the Christian faith. So many came to be baptized that the priests "from sheer fatigue, could no longer lift their arms to perform the ceremony."

The archæology of this region, and of the other neighborhoods to the northward, in particular that of the great plain of Peten which stretches up into Yucatan, is a fascinating story which must be left to its spe-

cialists and can scarcely be touched on here. But even for the most careless traveller, Quezaltenango is the centre of a region of great natural beauty and picturesqueness, and for those who have the time and who visit Guatemala in the dry season, there are superb mule-back and motor trips in almost any direction. It was a splendid flight down the road up which we had fought with such difficulty in the dark. Yawning green canyons dropped from one side of the road as sky-scraping peaks rose from the other. The volcanic smoke from the flanks of Santa Maria oozed from the earth, sometimes close to the car, and the fog, blown down from the peaks, would be caught in a blind canyon, and stream up out of it as if the chasm itself were on fire. It is quite possible to come in from the East Coast by way of the beautiful Rio Dulce and Lake Izabel, up by railroad to the Verapaz coffee country, and so on, over the mountains by mule, from village to village, to Quezaltenango. And there is another, easier but scarcely less interesting, cross-country ride from Quezaltenango along the high line to the capital by way of Sololá and the great crater lake of Atitlan.

Rains and other things made it impracticable to get any nearer to Atitlan this time than that view of the cones which rise above it which we had had already, from the trail to "El Pacayal," but on my earlier visit, although that, too, was in the rainy season, I did get up to the lake by mule from Patulul, and rowed across it with a party of Indians ferrying a load of raw-sugar blocks.

They were tough-bitten, muscular fellows, like most of these highland Indians, with nothing to keep out rain and cold but big home-made straw hats, cotton

shirts, and trousers that stopped between knee and ankle, and a home-woven woollen blanket or poncho which they wore wrapped round their waists by day, like a sort of short skirt, and slept in at night. They landed me at the hacienda of their *patrón*, a Señor Fuentes, who was away at the near-by town of Sololá, farther along on the northern shore of the lake, and the *mandador* put me up for the night, explaining that in his boss's absence the best he could offer was an unoccupied mattress, without bedding, in a shed adjoining his own room.

One had the feeling then, as one often has on the native haciendas, of stepping back to the life of an earlier century. All that afternoon Indian workmen, like those who had ferried me over the lake, were shelling corn by the primitive method of putting the ears in netting sacks and pounding them with clubs. The owner himself, of what was really a big farm, covering many square miles of mountainside, with scores of peasant workmen, must have lived crudely enough, and, once his personal effects were locked up, there seemed to be literally nothing with which to give a stranger a proper bed. There was a dirty mattress, but neither pillow, sheet, nor blanket, and these highland nights are actually cold. I pulled a sweater over my flannel shirt, spread some saddle-cloths, stiff with horse-hair and sweat, over that, and pulled my slicker over all. And balancing these things more or less unsuccessfully, devoured by fleas, slept as best one could, until the long-drawn cow-horn call, moaning up from the lake at dawn, told that the boatmen were already to start back across the lake again.

After the *mandador* and I had eaten our frugal sup-

per that night, almost fighting for it with two voracious cats, who sat alongside, ready to leap on anything we did not actually hold down with our hands, the household, including the *mandador*, the housekeeper and her daughter, a young Guatemalteco also bunking at the ranch on his way across the lake, and several men, amused themselves by dancing. Two of the ranch-hands had guitars, with which they played and sang in turn, while the dance consisted of an interminable sort of "doseydo," each circling about his partner, forward and back, somewhat after the fashion of one of the steps in a Virginia Reel. The damp, cheerless, stuccoed room was lit faintly by a single kerosene-lamp without a shade. The songs were melancholy, as if they borrowed something from the lonely winds that moan down through these deserted mountains. One could somehow feel the latter, towering outside, silent and soaked with rain, and the whole thing, which went on forever, long after I was able to keep an eye open, had an unsmiling formality and grimness which suggested something that might be happening in a lonely highland inn in Spain.

It was close to the anniversary of Guatemalan independence, then, an elaborate fiesta was preparing in the capital, and when we got back to the south shore of the lake next day, a squad of brown-faced little Indian boys with wooden guns were drilling on the lake shore under the eye of their languid school-teacher. Flags were out everywhere by the time I got back to Guatemala City, and the celebration itself began early next morning.

It rained all night, but before daylight choruses of obedient subjects were singing in the central plaza. At six, I bundled up in a raincoat and went over to the

square, before coffee, to see the "Guatemalan Youth" begin the long day.

They were massed in front of the Government building, shaken down later in the earthquake of 1917 —grave little brown-faced chaps in white duck suits and soldier caps, given them by the government, each holding over his shoulder a little light-blue and white Guatemalan flag. There they stood, with their Indian gravity and patience, while the light rain sifted down, and at a word from their leader broke shrilly into the national hymn. Those little white suits would be worn by many of them for dress-up clothes for the rest of the year, so a man in the crowd said. Their calloused bare feet stuck out quaintly from their stiff white-duck trousers, and most of them carried in their blouses a roll of bread, put there, doubtless, by thoughtful mothers, as they were dressing that morning by candle-light.

As the national hymn shrilled out, bugles leaped into it, and the cannon covering the streets that led into the plaza from either side began to fire. A lifting wail from the bugles and a crash from the cannon in front of them; then an answering bugle-cry from across the plaza and a crash from the cannon there. The cathedral bells clanged into the uproar, acrid powder-smoke filled the narrow streets and drifted over the "Juventud de Guatemala," all but hiding them, and they sang on, oblivious to noise, smoke and rain.

Later that morning—the forgotten "juventud," quite drenched now, still standing patiently in the rain —the Diplomatic Corps, the Cabinet and higher army officers gathered in the reception-hall on either side of a sort of throne on which sat old Don Estrada himself, and a silver-tongued orator lifted his voice in celebra-

tion of the ninety-second year of Guatemalan independence.

He spoke of "that day of fond and imperishable memory," of the "cannon of Lexington and Yorktown," the "immortal Jorge Washington," the "liberating torch lighted by Bolivar, San Martin, Hidalgo, and Morelos which blazed from the snowy heights of Popocatapetl to the farthest rampart of the Andean Cordillera." True, their history presented a long succession of civil wars, but it could not be said that they had been fruitless. There were influences from which they could not separate themselves, which made difficult the attempt suddenly to reform their societies and make them conform to Utopian ideals. There were references to Taine and Gustav Le Bon, and the conclusion that "we ought now to make an accomplished fact the equality of states, and liberty, culture, and progress as these are recognized and taught to us by the great republic of North America."

Such are the considerations which have guided the brilliant statesman who has turned the Fatherland into the pathway of the future, who has always preferred, above the clash of cannon, and battle-hymns, the happy music of schools, where, in fraternal association, the sons of rich and poor alike may learn the creed of democracy which will prepare them to be the defenders of our dearest and most transcendental interests.

May God protect, Señores, the destiny of the beloved Central American Fatherland, that in the midst of the irregularities which always menace law and justice, she may emerge, immaculate and triumphant, surrounded with a nimbus of intensest light, tranquil and happy through the labor of her sons, and lulled by the murmur of her azure seas, which, as their waves break eternally into white foam, eternally unfurl the sacred colors of our flag . . .!

There was applause, ushers promptly distributed copies of the speech, and the President, a vigorous, good-looking old gentleman, rather preoccupied and bored, arose and led the way to the formal handshaking, compliments, and champagne. It was interesting, then, that the orator never mentioned Guatemala by name, but always spoke of "our Central American Fatherland," as if Don Estrada's dream of restoring the old Central American federation were already realized.

V

The idea of a Central American union has naturally appealed to various Central American dictators—President Zelaya of Nicaragua tried to bring it about by force in 1907—and it is advocated from time to time by outsiders unaware of the practical obstacles that stand in its way. With the fall of Cabrera, Guatemala's "imperialistic" rôle in Isthmian politics shrunk somewhat, the old spy system went out of fashion, and the Great War and the Russian Revolution have had their effects here as elsewhere.

No paternal despot is building to-day in Guatemala Greek temples with tin roofs to Minerva in the name of education, but you will find in Guatemala City a Department of Indigenous Culture which is trying to do something toward changing the outlook of the more or less submerged brown Indian mass. In charge of it I found a young man who had studied in the States and spoke enthusiastically of the theories of Professor Dewey, and the central office was decorated with samples of grain, flowers, and fruits, and pictures of neat farms fenced with barbed wire, of red barns and silos,

and happy children with rakes and lawn-mowers. The place had much the same exotic air which surrounds similar offices in Soviet Russia, but it did represent a changing accent and direction—a movement which the revolution had carried much further in Mexico.

Among Guatemaltecos familiar with foreign points of view and tendencies, one found a certain self-consciousness about the Indian and his dreary lot which was less common before 1914. People were likely to make haste to assure the foreign visitor that labor conditions were quite different from what they were a generation ago even when they had the vaguest notion as to just what present conditions actually were. At the "Sociedad de Geographica y Historia de Guatemala" in the capital, I chatted with a Señor Beteta who had written the libretto of the first Mayan opera, "The Quiché Vinak" and also another operatic libretto called "Goda, or Heroes and Men of Quiché." Both librettos, and the music, composed by another Guatemalteco, Señor Jesus Castillo, were an attempt to express, in contemporary terms, the ideas and musical themes of the ancient Quichés. When I came to take leave of Señor Jose Mitas, the cultured and engaging gentleman who had just left the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, it was suggestive of the new drift that he should give me as a souvenir the "Book of Quiché" or "Quiché Bible," as it is sometimes called, with its quaint account of the creation of the world.

Mr. Beteta spoke of the difficulty of lifting the "dead weight" of the Indian, of his shyness, suspicion, preference for being left alone, and disinclination for the regular work necessary to maintain standards of living regarded as important by the white man. But with

Mexico so near, he didn't think it would be safe to try to restore the old law of "*mandamiento*"—shanghaiing Indians for forced labor—and he took pains to express the grief he always felt on hearing the American phrase "the only good Indian is a dead Indian," and to point out that in Guatemala they had not, at least, killed off their Indians, and for better or worse, were building their civilization with them rather than against them.

One of the interesting things about the native civilization which, in this part of Central America, preceded that which the conquerors brought from Spain—as well as its peculiar tragedy—is the late date down to which it survived and the completeness with which it disappeared. The cities and monuments uncovered in jungles now being penetrated or cleared by banana-growers and gatherers of chicle gum, are not relics of an age which preceded Greece and Rome, but things contemporary with the Normans and Magna Charta. These indigenous Guatemalans—as I said before, their story cannot be attempted here—had a civilization which equalled that of much of the old world of their time. They had astronomers, a calendar, and knew as much about the stars and sun as anybody of their day. Guatemala had, perhaps, twice as many inhabitants then as she has now, and her cities were as large or larger than they are to-day. The Indians of what is now Guatemala are naturally artistic, and every visitor is struck with the gracefully embroidered *guipiles* which the women wear, the well-made, home-woven blankets, the pottery, and the amount of "color" everywhere. They were never fighters and hunters, after the fashion of our fiercer North American red men, but comparatively domesticated folk, and to-day those who are city-broke seem to take

readily to machinery and often become capable mechanics and chauffeurs. With their large proportion of illiterates and their other disabilities, they are undoubtedly more or less a "dead weight" at the moment, but many foreigners who have worked among them feel that they are not by any means "dead" but have a vitality and adaptiveness which will one day bring them, as it seems to be bringing the Mexicans, their renaissance.

Guatemala had the common Central American difficulties with the debts contracted abroad during the days of the Central American Federation, but, after various wrangles and readjustments, began, in 1913, regularly to meet interest payments on a foreign debt which, considering the country's resources, is not excessive. Until recently her currency was in bad shape, but in 1924 it was put on a gold basis, a central bank was established with the exclusive power, for ten years, of issuing suitably secured bank-notes, and the unit of exchange is now the silver *quetzal*, worth $1, and named after the national bird which it bears on one of its handsome faces.

If the Germans, with their ownership of many of the larger coffee fincas, and their control of much of the coffee-export trade, and their spacious Verein in the capital, seem more noticeable than other foreigners, yet practical geographic and other facts continue their quiet subsurface work and more than half the imports come from the United States. A young American was working on a reorganization of the antiquated customs' service while I was there, and endeavoring to find ways through which the government might collect what was really coming to it, the luxurious caviare pay a higher duty than the humble sardine, and suitable duties be arranged for automobiles, which had come into being

THE TIGHTLY WRAPPED SKIRT WITH ITS HIGH WIDE SASH OFTEN GIVES A TOUCH OF THE ORIENT TO THE GUATEMALTECA'S COSTUME.

INDIAN WOMAN WITH HOMESPUN, EMBROIDERED "GUIPILE," IN THE GUATEMALAN CAPITAL.

GUATEMALTECA INDIAN WOMEN ON THE WAY FROM THEIR VILLAGE TO MARKET IN THE CAPITAL.

since the customs laws were established and were not even mentioned by name.

Here, as in the other Central American countries, the Rockefeller health work was a reassuring thing for Americans to see. The physician in charge of the central office in the capital said that ambulatory units, regularly visiting the various neighborhoods of what is still, in spite of a considerable railroad system, largely an "unopened" country, would probably be the best method to use in the end. In any tropical country, as in our own South, the prevalence of such parasites as hookworm is partially due to the fact that they are never winter-killed as they might be, even with similar living-conditions, further north. One listened to interesting talk about the different methods of attacking hookworm—the slower but more thorough chenopodium treatment, and the carbontetrachloride treatment which kills about 96 per cent of the parasites at once. The latter is a poison, but is put up in a form not soluble by the human system and followed two hours later by a purge after it has done its work. And I saw, safely pickled in alcohol, a hideous worm known as "ascaris" which is about 18 inches long and has the grisly habit, once it finds lodging inside a man, of crawling into his lungs and giving him pneumonia.

You will find here, as elsewhere, the congenital Central American jealousy and distrust of the United States, but I saw no signs of it which were not understandable, circumstances being as they are and more or less must be, and one found the politically sophisticated Guatemalteco—such a man as the Foreign Minister already mentioned, for instance, who speaks perfect English and is as much at home in New York as in

his own capital—quite ready to grant the special interest which the United States must necessarily have in the Isthmian republics and only asking that we be somewhat less brusque and more understanding in our manners, and in our methods of putting our wishes into effect.

One leaves with regret the beautiful Guatemalan highlands—a region to which, because of its nearness and its natural and historical charms, North Americans must inevitably come in greater numbers—for the run down the eastern slope to Puerto Barrios. It is a less interesting ride than that down the western slope of the continental divide. The Motagua valley, up which the railway climbs from the Caribbean, is comparatively brown and dry; there is none of that jolly, family-party air of the trains bound "al Pacifico," with their *finqueros* returning to their coffee, and when you do finally get down to Quiriguá, and the banana-plantations, screened overseers' headquarters and spotless hospitals of the United Fruit Company, you are, for all practical purposes, in a detached bit of the United States, with a "colonial" ruling class as remote, psychologically, from the land it lives in, as are the Canal Zone Americans at Panama.

At Quiriguá, where every traveller able to do so should arrange to visit the impressive and elaborately carved altar-stones and columns which go back to the Maya civilization of the Sixth Century A. D., one of these "colonials," a physician, perhaps, in riding-clothes, with a certain urbane, bachelor-clubman-like manner, boarded the train, dropped into the seat behind me, and discoursed at length, with an American lady who apparently had come up the line to visit friends, on the merits of Lenz's book on bridge. "You lose your queen,

but—" etc., etc., while the lowland air grew hotter and the little train ran down to the sea.

The lady came from Livingston, at the mouth of the beautiful Rio Dulce, spoke a complacent but awful Spanish, and was afflicted with that superiority complex which, amongst Americans who go to live in "backward" tropical neighborhoods, seems to attack the female of the species more virulently than it does their husbands. She bargained out of the car-window at every stop for pineapples and never wearied of bawling at the imperturbable *ladina* market-women that she was no tourist, lived in Livingston, and never paid more than ten cents for pines.

"*Yo no estoy tourista! Yo vivo en Livingston!* . . ." More Americans got on at nearly every station, and to each, after the first greetings were over, she repeated her story of the avariciousness and effrontery of the pineapple venders. "And I told them, '*Yo no estoy tourista! Yo vivo en Livingston!*' . . ." Thank heaven for that!

Puerto Barrios is the end of one of the long arms of the United Fruit, of one of those funnels, so to speak, through which, by means of a closely knit organization, including plantations, express-steamers, and refrigerator-trains, what was once a tropical novelty has become as common and as cheap as native fruit in every grocery-store and on every fruit-stand in the United States.

The United Fruit sometimes speaks of itself as the "world's greatest farmer." It has under cultivation in various parts of the American tropics some 455,000 acres, and nearly a million and a half additional acres unimproved but under lease. It owns 1,571 miles of railway-line and 717 miles of tramway, with about 200

locomotives and 7,000 cars. Its fleet of deep-sea ships, owned or chartered, and including the express-passenger steamers running between the United States and various Caribbean ports, numbers about 100. In 1926 the company shipped from the several Caribbean countries in which it has plantations nearly 50,000,000 stems of bananas, in addition to producing considerable amounts of sugar and cacao, and carrying some 993,000 tons of freight, 196,000 bags of mail and nearly 67,000 passengers.

The United Fruit Company was formed through the merger, in 1899, of the Boston Fruit Company, which had drawn most of its bananas from the West Indies, and the three companies representing the Keith interests, which had taken their fruit from Central America and Colombia. The Boston Fruit Company goes back to importations brought to Boston in 1870 by Captain Lorenzo D. Baker in his schooner *Telegraph*, while the Keith companies grew out of the banana shipments which Minor C. Keith brought to New Orleans in 1872 on the deck of the steamer *Juan G. Meiggs*. Mr. Keith was then just attacking the task of building a railroad from Puerto Limon up to San José, and seeing that the road could never be finished unless there were freight to feed it, he went into the banana business. When the United Fruit was formed, some twenty-two companies were engaged in shipping bananas to the United States. It is said that well over a hundred companies had been organized previously for the purpose of shipping bananas to this country, but most of them, after flickering for a time, fell by the wayside. Mr. Keith, about 1907, tried shipping Costa Rican bananas to Liverpool by covering the ends of the stems with asphalt and packing the bananas with dried leaves in

crates, but found, after three years' experiment, that he had lost money. Elders and Fyffes, Ltd., which began about 1900 to distribute in Europe the bananas brought over from Jamaica to Liverpool in the Elder-Dempster ships, and later built its own refrigerator-ships, was taken over by the United Fruit Company in 1910, and since then Central American as well as Jamaican bananas have gone in refrigerator-ships to Europe.

Puerto Barrios is one of those at once artificial and indispensable towns which hang from the industry which created them. If people were suddenly to stop eating bananas, Puerto Barrios would stop like an unwound clock. It consists of the long wharf and screened offices and quarters of the Fruit Company; a semi-American hotel which lives on the travellers who must spend the night there on their way to and from the highlands; cabins for negro laborers straggling along a beach washed by rotting fruit and the filthy black grease from oil-burning steamers; and lines of narrow-gauge railway running back into the bush.

You are not exactly in the United States, although American faces, talk, and methods are all about, nor in what might be called the real Guatemala, of white walls, blue volcanoes, mule-trains, and highland air. The damp warm breath of the tropics drifts through the palms, the Caribbean falls languidly on the low flat beach, yet Puerto Barrios is as much a link in the chain of modern industry as an iron-foundry or a gas-tank.

And here, as sometimes happens at the source, one sees some of the waste which accompanies, perhaps inevitably, the Fruit Company's economies, and is struck with the cynicisms of an industry which, looked at from the consumer's end, shows mostly its romance. All next morning as we waited for the ship to fill with green

fruit, the freight-cars kept returning from the dock-shed with almost as many rejected stems, it seemed, as they had taken down. Some of these bananas were slightly undersize, some carried a few bruises which might turn to rot en route. Whatever the various reasons for their rejection might be—their actual quality, the state of the market, a policy of keeping up prices by shipping only the best—the fact remained, that from the ordinary consumer's point of view, the rejected bananas were as good, for all practical purposes, as those shipped. It had cost just as much time and work and taken just as much from the soil to grow these rejected stems and now there was nothing they could be used for—the supply was not regular enough, one of the bosses said, even to serve for feeding hogs—and they were simply run back and dumped into the swamp.

The Fruit Company undoubtedly knows its business better than the casual traveller, but the latter's housewifely instinct does shiver a bit at the trainloads of wasted stems or the sight of a stevedore kicking off the wharf into the ocean a bunch of bananas, which, only three days' steaming away, might serve as a holiday present for a whole roomful of school-children.

Full-up and hatches closed, the steamer pulls out about luncheon-time, leaves behind the Guatemalan mountains, soon shrinking down to a serrated blue wall, and runs northward off the British Honduras keys. It generally blows a bit on this leg, until one is past the rather narrow gateway between the western end of Cuba and the tip of Yucatan, and then, with luck, one eases into a Gulf as sleepy-blue and sunny as it seems the Gulf ought to be.

Two days later, a great arc of brown water, too wide

to see across—corn-belt dust brought down in the fresh tide of the Mississippi—comes lapping its way out into the blue Gulf. Then you pick up a light-ship, and about sundown start up the river toward New Orleans. The fruiter ties up at her dock by early breakfast-time. Men and refrigerator-cars and endless loading belts are ready and waiting, and the green stems, just beginning to turn now, are filling the trains for the North before you have had time to get through the customs.

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